Hafa Adai!

IPI found in contempt anew in sex harassment case. PAGE 3

Man in fraud case to serve 14-day imprisonment. PAGE 6

$1

Saipan Tribune

Volume XXXI, Issue No. 204

TINIAN ROAD REPAIR
Equipment Operator 2nd Class Robert Skinner, assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 5, operates an excavator as part of the U.S. Navy Seabees project to repair roads on Tinian in the Northern Mariana Islands.
U.S. NAVY/CM3 CULLEN WATSON

THURSDAY OCTOBER 14, 2021
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'This is the last straw'

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
kimberly_bautista@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The U.S. District Court for the NMI has warned Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC that after multiple contempt findings against it if it continues to fail to abide by court sanctions, the court will find its executives in contempt personally.

In an order by U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona Manglona yesterday, she warned IPI that if it fails to make payments toward the sanctions imposed on it in the lawsuit filed by its former em-

See THIS on Page 4

Default judgment vs IPI OK'd

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
kimberly_bautista@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The CNMI Superior Court granted in part but denied in part the request for default judgment filed by neighboring establishments of Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC's casino in Garapan.

According to an order issued by Superior Court Associate Judge Teresa Kim-Tenorio, the court granted default judgment on the plaintiffs' claim of private nuisance per accidens, but denied default judgment on the claim of tortious interference with an existing contract.

The plaintiffs in this case include American Herbal Essence Group, American Create Beauty Corp., and

See DEFAULT on Page 4

IPI found in contempt anew in sex harassment case

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
kimberly_bautista@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The U.S. District Court for the NMI has found Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC in contempt again in another sexual harassment case filed by a former Best Sunshine Casino dealer.

Following a show-cause hearing last week, U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona Manglona found IPI in contempt in the sexual harassment suit filed by a former IPI dealer for the company's failure to make payments toward a $60,000 settlement agreement.

Manglona continued the show-cause hearing for today, Oct. 14, where sanctions will be imposed in order for IPI to purge itself of contempt.

In the motion for a show-cause hearing filed by the

See IPI on Page 4

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:
- **Red:** Least safe
- **Orange**
- **Yellow**
- **Blue**
- **Green:** Safest

Source: Office of the Governor

AT A GLANCE

As of 7:00pm, Oct. 13, 2021

VACCINATIONS IN THE CNMI

Eligible Population Fully Vaccinated:	82.8%
Days since last community transmission	203

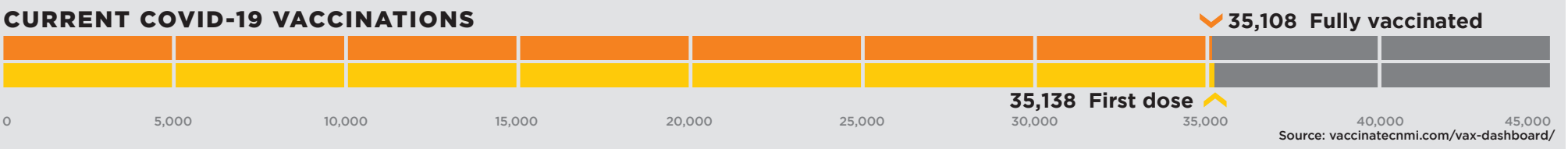
Pfizer/BioNTech	
Initiated:	30,258
Fully Vaccinated:	29,612
Moderna	
Initiated:	4,880
Fully Vaccinated:	4,675
Janssen	
Fully Vaccinated:	821

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	16,461	134	16,595
Recovered	13,405	24	13,429
Active	2,813	185	2,947
Deaths	217	2	219

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	281	0	281
Traced via Travel Screening	244	0	244
Traced via Community Screening	37	0	37
Deaths	3	0	3

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., https://www.vaccinatecnmi.com/vax-dashboard/

CURRENT COVID-19 VACCINATIONS



Source: vaccinatecnmi.com/vax-dashboard/

INSIDE

NATION
Evacuation orders were expanded for a growing wildfire driven by winds in Southern California.
PAGE 12

ASIA
A tropical storm over the tip of the Philippines leaves at least 11 people dead and seven missing.
PAGE 13

ENVIRONMENT
The Grotto has finally reopened to the public after over a year of being closed for renovations.
PAGE 14

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Local

14 inmates participating in NMTI-DOC pilot program

By JOSHUA SANTOS
joshua_santos@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Fourteen inmates are currently participating in a pilot program between the Northern Marianas Technical Institute and the Department of Corrections, where inmates learn a trades skill that they can use later.

NMTI chief executive officer Jodina Attao said in an email Monday that the pilot program and the classes for the inmates began on Oct. 6 in a classroom that was set up at DOC's Outreach Program facility. Luis Deleon Guerrero will be carrying out instruction with the inmates for the next 20 weeks, said Attao.

The inmates are taking "CORE: Intro to Construction Basics," a prerequisite course for all construction-related programs at NMTI.

Attao said "so much detail" went into making the NMTI-DOC pilot program a reality. She emphasized the importance of providing inmates with opportunities to reintegrate successfully into society upon their release from DOC.

"So much detail has been put into the planning process to make this happen. I'd like to thank the DOC Commissioner, Wally Villagomez; legal counsel Leslie Healer; Sgt. Jeff Quitugua; and the NMTI faculty and staff for their time and effort in making this a possibility," said Attao.

"Working with our correctional system allows us to assist with providing other avenues of promoting personal growth. It is our hope that as we continue to work with inmates, they will have a better chance of finding jobs upon their release, and play a part in decreasing [the tendency of a convicted criminal to reoffend]. We are looking forward to partnering with others who are interested in serving the underserved in our communities," she added.

NMTI and DOC signed a memorandum of agreement last Sep. 27 that made official the pilot program where DOC inmates can take trades courses through NMTI. Once they complete "CORE: Intro to Construction Basics," the inmates will be asked to complete a survey to choose a new specialized course for them to complete next.

Torres upbeat about Marianas Village Pride

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres is upbeat about the recently launched Marianas Village Pride, a campaign that seeks to inspire students and residents to show pride in the village where they live by taking part in fun beautification activities.

Torres said Friday the Marianas Village Pride or MVP campaign of the Governor's Council of Economic Advisors will promote accountability on environmental cleanliness and also enhance tourism.

"All of us here, wherever you grew up, whatever village, each and everyone of us have a pride in that village. And I think now is just one step closer and one step deeper into showcasing why you [love] where you grew up," the governor said.

With the MPV campaign, a village can come up with different activities or art or anything that is significant for that village. Coming into the holidays, the governor said there will be some activities for the best village on Christmas lights or the best house with Christmas lights. He said the ultimate goal is to bring pride to each village.

Torres cited as an example Koblerville where he grew up. He said people in Koblerville are proud that they're the cleanest village in the CNMI.

"Those are the type of the pride that we want each village to brag about, whether it's about having the nicest art or the nicest building or most number of volunteers, the nicest *pala pala* on Beach Road, or the most product being shipped out or exported, or the nicest artifacts," he said.

Saipan Mayor David Apatang earlier stated that village pride entails being proud of where a person comes from and showing that pride by beautifying homes, neighborhoods, streets, schools, community centers, parks, and attractions for the benefit for all residents.

Application Deadline: December 10, 2021

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Man sues security firm for paying him less than minimum

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

The U.S. District Court for the NMI has allowed a man to move forward with his lawsuit against a security company and former employer for its alleged failure to pay him the CNMI's minimum wage of $7.25.

In her screening order yesterday, Chief Judge Ramona Manglona allowed Mohammad Jashmin Uddin to move forward with his lawsuit against his ex-employer, Mohammad Nurul Islam Bhuiyan, and his security company, Island Protection Services or IPS.

In the lawsuit filed by Uddin's lawyer, Cong Nie, he claims that Bhuiyan and IPS violated the law by paying Uddin at a rate that was lower than what was required by the CNMI Minimum Wage and Hour Act.

"Bhuiyan and IPS initially paid Uddin only the rate of $3.75 per hour for both regular hours and overtime and gradually increased this rate over time, and eventually to $5 per hour in 2019 and 2020—always below the applicable federal minimum wage and always without the required 1.5 multiplier for overtime hours," he said.

According to the suit, the pay Uddin received during his period of employment with Bhuiyan and IPS totals approximately $68,185. Had Uddin been properly paid the applicable minimum wage and overtime pay, he would have received approximately $127,000. Therefore, Nie said, Bhuiyan and IPS owes Uddin unpaid wages in the amount of over $58,000.

"To date, Bhuiyan and IPS still have not fully paid Uddin," Nie said.

Nie noted that Uddin's work each workweek typically exceeded 40 hours per week and generally ranged from 50 to 70 hours per week.

Uddin wants Bhuiyan and IPS to pay him compensatory damages, liquidated damages under the FLSA and the MWHA, costs of bringing the suit, including attorney's fees, and other relief the court deems just and proper.

Uddin was employed by Bhuiyan and IPS under CW-1 visa . The contracts provided that Uddin would be paid the minimum wage and overtime pay at the rate of 1.5 times the minimum wage. However, Bhuiyan and IPS did not pay Uddin in accordance with those contracts.

Starting around 2019, Nie said Bhuiyan required Uddin to sign Uddin's name on timesheets that did not include Uddin's overtime hours, while still having Uddin to report his actual hours to Bhuiyan so that Bhuiyan could calculate wages by applying the below-minimum rates stated above to the total actual hours.

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JGO agrees to resolve testimonial immunity issue in probe

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Washington D.C.-based lawyer of Gov. Ralph DLG Torres, Ross Garber, took part in a conference call yesterday before the House of Representatives Judiciary and Governmental Operations Committee meeting, during which he explained further the constitutional testimonial immunity and privilege of the governor's executive assistant, but at the same time proposed a negotiated resolution.

JGO Committee chair Rep. Celina R. Babauta (D-Saipan) announced after the meeting that there is one thing that they agree with Garber's statements: that they should resolve the issues in the House chamber and respect the legislative process.

Babauta postponed the JGO hearing set for today, Thursday, and reset it to Tuesday, Oct. 19, at 10:30am.

"We hope that no further barriers or obstacles are placed in our way so that we can receive the testimony of Ms. Frances Dela Cruz, the executive assistant to the governor," Babauta said.

In response to *Saipan Tribune*'s inquiry, Babauta said they hope to meet with Garber and Dela Cruz's lawyer, Viola Alepuyo, this Monday to resolve the issues.

Alepuyo, along with Governor's Office lawyer, Gilbert Birnbrich, appeared at yesterday's meeting. Both did not argue, saying Garber fully explained their position.

Alepuyo also wrote Babauta last Tuesday reaffirming that her client is invoking her rights and objecting to the subpoena based on her constitutional testimonial immunity and privilege.

"We continue to hope that we can resolve these issues amicably without the need for judicial intervention,"Alepuyo said.

Torres hired Garber to represent him and the Governor's Office in the committee's investigation into his expenditure of public funds and travels.

Garber noted that there are significant executive privilege issues implicated by the committee's subpoena of Dela Cruz that must be addressed, including the gubernatorial communications privilege and the deliberative process privilege.

Garber again wrote Babauta last Tuesday after receiving the latter's statement that the committee is prepared to enforce the subpoena through legal remedies, to include but not limited to contempt proceedings. This came soon after he first wrote Babauta on Monday, where he first raised the issue of testimonial immunity.

Garber said the notion that a witness would be threatened with criminal contempt because the Executive Branch of the CNMI government has raised serious constitutional issues is an unnecessary escalation and undermines principles of comity between the legislative and executive branches.

"These kinds of issues have come up often in connection with legislative investigations but are almost always resolved through negotiation. I hope that we can constructively find a path forward," said Garber in his letter.

Before announcing the new JGO hearing date, Babauta pointed out that the committee's investigation has allowed them to question police officers, administrative personnel and directors, and that most of these witnesses testified that either they don't recall, they don't remember, they don't know, or have asked that simple questions be translated into the vernacular. She said all of them have brought legal counsel who have raised issues regarding procedures and language.

On the other hand, she said, they have had Lt. Gov. Arnold I. Palacios and Commonwealth Utilities Corp. executive director Gary P. Camacho, who both willingly answered inquiries made by the committee members.

Asserting absolute testimonial immunity on behalf of the employees who are not senior aides, Babauta said, borders on a conspiracy to frustrate any investigation of Torres himself. "It makes people wonder what is there to hide," she said.

Babauta said the Office of the Governor asserts that senior officials of the Executive Branch have complete immunity from legislative subpoenas, basing this position on internal memos of the federal Department of Justice. Babauta pointed out, though, that state and federal courts have taken the opposite position. She said there is no precedent in CNMI law on the issue of testimonial immunity for the Executive Branch.

"My colleagues and my people, we are here to strengthen and defend the rule of law, not to weaken it, not to attenuate it, and not to disfigure it," the lawmaker said.

Babauta said this is not a question of the perfection of law, but a question of democratic foundations and principles. "The personal fate of the governor is not the issue. The political fate of his party [Republican] is not the issue," she said.

Babauta said that Torres is a trustee of the Commonwealth's finances and resources, and that he has taken an oath to ensure that the laws of the Commonwealth be followed. "And that's what the Constitution says, not what his defenders say," Babauta said.

Rep. Vicente Camacho (D-Saipan) takes issue with Garber representing Torres at the committee hearing, saying he is not a registered attorney in the CNMI Bar. Camacho said that Garber invoking his knowledge and experience against the people of the CNMI is "too disrespecting the people of the CNMI."

Rep. Donald Manglona (Ind-Rota) questioned where was this argument about testimonial immunity when special assistant for administration Mathilda A. Rosario came in to testify. He said no one ever made this an issue and they allowed Rosario to testify in front of the committee. Rosario's role in the Governor's Office deals with the processing of documents for the governor's review.

Rep. Christina Sablan (D-Saipan) said Garber cites no case law supporting this position of testimonial immunity. For the most part, Sablan said, they have heard Garber cite internal memoranda from the Department of Justice, which is not a controlling authority and which the courts have disagreed with.

"The governor is not a king. His staff do not have absolute immunity," she said.

A longer version of this story is available at www.saipantribune.com

THIS

From Page 1

ployee, Joshua Gray, by today, she will have no choice but to personally fine and impose sanctions on IPI's executives, including jail time.

"Having found IPI in contempt again, the court warns IPI that this is the final straw. The court is utterly appalled at IPI's flagrant disregard of the court's orders. Despite the fee order being imposed as sanction for IPI's failure to comply with the court's discovery order, IPI again disregarded the court's order by not paying that sanction. While the court recognizes that it is to impose the least possible sanction to coerce compliance, monetary sanctions against IPI are clearly ineffective as demonstrated by IPI's failure to even pay the attorneys' fees award," she said.

"IPI is ordered to immediately comply with the court's fee order by paying to plaintiff his attorneys' fees and costs in the amount of $19,616.25 no later than [today], Oct. 14. Ray Yumul, Tao Xing, and all other IPI directors, officers, and executives are on notice that a failure to comply with the fee order will result in a finding of contempt against IPI and them personally as well, and subject them to severe sanctions, including, but not limited to, a monetary fine and/or incarceration of three days until the contempt is cured," Manglona added.

Back on Sept. 30, the court issued an order to show cause against IPI ordering IPI to explain why the court should not find it in contempt and impose sanctions for its failure to comply with the court's July 8, order requiring IPI to pay to plaintiff his attorney's fees and costs in the amount of $19,616.25 no later than Aug. 9.

The fee order was issued as a sanction against IPI after being found in contempt for failing to obey the court's previous discovery orders.

In issuing the OSC, the court ordered IPI to show cause in writing no later than Oct. 4 why the court should not enter an order finding IPI in contempt; ordering immediate compliance; imposing sanctions such as a $2,000 per day fine or monetary sanctions and/or incarceration against IPI's directors, officers, and executives, personally, including Yumul and Xing; and ordering IPI to pay plaintiff attorneys' fees and costs for having to pursue this OSC. However, IPI did not file any response by the Oct. 4 deadline.

At the OSC hearing on Oct. 7, IPI represented that it still had not paid any part of the $19,616.25 owed to plaintiff, even though it had a portion of that amount in possession and paid other obligations since the order was issued.

The court found IPI in contempt "for clearly and unambiguously" violating the court's fee order.

IPI

From Page 1

plaintiffs' lawyer, William Fitzgerald, the plaintiff wants the court to order IPI to immediately make payments toward the balance due in addition to attorney's fees and costs,

Should IPI claim it does not have funding, Fitzgerald said the court should mandate IPI sell assets to satisfy the judgment.

Fitzgerald said his client is also asking the court to impose a $2,000 fine for each day IPI fails to make payment, and further sanctions if IPI continues to fail in its obligations.

"IPI has failed to comply with this court's judgment and has failed to make a required $30,000 payment, but has bounced a check made out to the Law Office of William M. Fitzgerald Trust Account. To date, IPI has not made payment and has not requested for an extension of time," Fitzgerald said.

According to court documents, the victim in the case originally filed the civil action against Stephen Brown, the plaintiff's former pit supervisor, and IPI back in October 2019.

In March 2021, Brown was dismissed with prejudice pursuant to the parties' agreement.

Shortly thereafter, the remaining parties agreed to an entry of judgment and entered into a settlement agreement for the amount of $60,000.

The court retained jurisdiction to enforce the judgment and terms of settlement.

In September 2017, the plaintiff filed a complaint against Brown with IPI's Human Resource Department, asking them to investigate and tell her whether her supervisor's hostile actions toward her were caused by mistakes she made in her work, or if they were reprisals for her refusal to agree to Brown's sexual requests.

After filing her complaint, the plaintiff claims she was never contacted by IPI's Human Resource Department, resulting in further sexual advances by her pit supervisor.

DEFAULT

From Page 1

American Dongsheng Corp. These are the businesses operating besides the IPI casino. Their lawsuit stemmed from their claim that the IPI construction prevented them from getting any customers, hence their "nuisance" claim. They also claimed that the IPI construction interfered with their businesses and their ability to make their lease payments, hence the "tortious interference" claim.

Kim-Tenorio said the plaintiffs satisfied the requirements of default judgment for their private nuisance per accidens claim, but not for their tortious interference claim.

A private nuisance per accidens is a non-trespassory interference with the private use and enjoyment of land, which becomes a nuisance through the circumstances and manner in which the defendant acts.

"Plaintiffs' factual allegations…sufficiently support the first element of nuisance per accidens. Defendant used its property, under its permit, to dig a [two-foot] deep trench, which ran approximately 16 meters across the south-facing entrance of plaintiffs' subleased premises and six meters across a portion of the east-facing area of the subleased premise. The south-facing entrance of plaintiffs' property was the only available and accessible entrance into plaintiffs' business establishment. Defendant also posted detour signs redirecting foot and vehicular traffic away from the south-facing entrance of plaintiffs' subleased premises. Defendant's construction activities clearly interfered with plaintiffs' use and enjoyment of its property, and this interference became unreasonable, when defendant's own conduct delayed construction," Kim-Tenorio stated.

In addition, Kim-Tenorio said that, because of the heavy roadwork construction, American Create Beauty was unable to open its business on its expected date, and was unable to ever open up its restaurant and retail business.

"Due to defendant's unreasonable interference, plaintiffs also suffered substantial injury, in the form of loss of present and future economic profit," she said.

As for the tortious interference claim, the court found that the plaintiffs did not provide enough evidence to satisfy this claim.

"Tortious interference with contract occurs when the defendant intentionally and improperly interferes with the performance of a contract, between the plaintiff and a third person, by causing the third person not to perform the contract. The court found that plaintiffs failed to show that [IPI] had intended to improperly interfere with plaintiffs' lease agreements with their landlord because plaintiffs had not provided enough evidence of defendant's improper motive, among other factors," the judge stated.

The plaintiffs filed their suit against IPI back in May due to the construction activities of the defendant and its contractors, which allegedly caused economic loss to the businesses of American Herbal Essence Group, American Create Beauty Corp., and Dongsheng Corp.

IPI had repeatedly failed to appear in court through its corporate counsel, despite the court's prior order and warnings so the plaintiffs finally asked for a default judgment.

In their original suit, the plaintiffs sought relief of $424,674.38 in damages. The court has yet to determine how much IPI will be ordered to pay pursuant to the default judgment order.

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JOSHUA SANTOS

POETRY COMPETITION

This year's Junior and Senior Division competitors in the 17th Annual Valentine N. Sengebau Poetry Competition and their coaches share a group photo after the event, which was held at the Marianas High School cafeteria on Monday. Also pictured is Northern Marianas Humanities Council executive director Leo G. Pangelinan, NMHC project coordinator Andrew Roberto, Rep. Leila Staffler, and Northern Marianas College professor Adam Walsh. Pangelinan, Staffler, and Walsh judged the competition this year.

USCIS reaches H-2B cap for first half of fiscal year 2022

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has received enough petitions to reach the congressionally mandated cap on H-2B visas for temporary nonagricultural workers for the first half of fiscal year 2022. Sept. 30 was the final receipt date for new cap-subject H-2B worker petitions requesting an employment start date before April 1, 2022. USCIS will reject new cap-subject H-2B petitions received after Sept. 30 that request an employment start date before April 1, 2022.

USCIS continues to accept H-2B petitions that are exempt from the congressionally mandated cap. This includes petitions for:

Current H-2B workers in the United States who extend their stay, change employers, or change the terms and conditions of their employment;

Fish roe processors, fish roe technicians, and/or supervisors of fish roe processing; and

Workers performing labor or services in the CNMI and/or Guam from Nov. 28, 2009, until Dec. 31, 2029.

U.S. businesses use the H-2B program to employ foreign workers for temporary nonagricultural jobs. Currently, Congress has set the H-2B cap at 66,000 per fiscal year, with 33,000 for workers who begin employment in the first half of the fiscal year (Oct. 1 - March 31) and 33,000 (plus any unused numbers from the first half of the fiscal year) for workers who begin employment in the second half of the fiscal year (April 1 - Sept. 30). ***(PR)***

Man in fraud case to serve 14-day imprisonment

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
kimberly_bautista@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The U.S. District Court for the NMI has imposed a 14-day sentence on a man who pleaded guilty to his involvement in producing fraudulent identification documents. He will be subject to deportation proceedings upon his release from prison.

District court Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona sentenced Margarito Cortez Villafuerte to serve 14 days in prison after he pleaded guilty to the charge of conspiracy to unlawfully produce an identification document.

Following his release from prison, Villafuerte is ordered to submit to a term of supervised release of one year and comply with conditions as adopted by the court.

Aside from his sentence, Manglona also ordered the probation officer to submit Villafuerte's passport to U.S. Citizenship Immigration Services–Enforcement Removal Office for removal proceedings.

Villafuerte was ordered by the court to self-surrender to the U.S. Marshals Service.

According to court documents, Villafuerte, a 64-year-old Philippine national, first arrived on Saipan in 2009. On or about June 21, 2017, Villafuerte, who had no immigration status, paid somebody else the sum of $150 to obtain a CNMI driver's license. Four years later, on June 23, 2021, Villafuerte was charged by information with the offense of conspiracy to unlawfully produce an identification document. He entered into a plea agreement on Aug. 31, 2021, where he declared that he fully accepts responsibility for his actions.

Initially, Villafuerte's lawyer, Steven Pixley, proposed a probation sentence instead of imprisonment. Pixley said a probation sentence is appropriate because pursuant to the plea agreement his client signed, the United States government agreed to recommend that the court impose a sentence no longer than seven days in prison.

In addition, based on the findings of the U.S. Probation Office, a total offense level of 4 and a criminal history category of 1, which Villafuerte falls under, the guideline imprisonment range is zero months to six months.

Equally American calls for extending SSI to US territories

Congressional delays in passing the fiscal year 2022 budget reconciliation bill have created a new window of opportunity for those hoping to see the U.S. Congress act on President Joe Biden's promise to extend Supplemental Security Income benefits to hundreds of thousands of the most vulnerable residents of U.S. territories. Equally American wrote House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer yesterday to request that they do not miss the opportunity to deliver on Biden's promise.

"If Congress does not to include SSI in the upcoming reconciliation bill, the political path forward will only become more difficult, likely closing altogether with the upcoming mid-term elections," said Neil Weare, president of Equally American, which advocates for equality for the 3.5 million citizens in U.S. territories. "That's why it's important we call on our elected officials to continue pressing Congress to take action now while this political window is still open. Once the window closes, it may be decades before we see an opportunity like this again."

Equally American's letter emphasizes that national polling shows broad bipartisan support for extending SSI to citizens in the territories through reconciliation. Further, it highlights that more than 2 million members of the territorial diaspora who can vote live in important swing states like Florida and Pennsylvania that will have competitive U.S. Senate races in 2022.

Representatives from the territories have introduced several pieces of legislation that would provide full parity in SSI to residents of the territories.

- Territorial Equity Act of 2021 (S. 1228): Sen. Bernie Sanders (D-VT). Cosponsors: Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Sen. Ed Markey (D-MA).
- Territorial Equity Act of 2021 (HR. 2713): Rep. Nydia Velazquez (D-NY). Cosponsors: Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), Grijalva (D-AZ) and Torres (D-NY).
- SSI Equality Act (HR 537): Rep. Gonzalez Colon. Cosponsors: Torres (D-NY), Plaskett (D-USVI), Radewagen (R-AS), Sablan (D-MP) and San Nicolas (D-GU).
- Guam SSI Equality Act (HR 157): Rep. San Nicolas (D-GU). Cosponsors: 28 Members.

But if this legislation is not included as part of the budget reconciliation bill, it is unlikely to pass on its own.

The specific timeline for passage of the reconciliation bill is uncertain as Democratic leaders negotiate both the overall amount of the package and the specifics to be included. While these details remain in flux, there is an opportunity to have SSI included in the bill.

Residents of the territories should contact their elected officials to call on them to continue pushing for SSI to be included in the reconciliation bill. Those living stateside who care about the territories should call both their representative and senators to ask them to support including SSI in the reconciliation bill. ***(PR)***

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JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT # 05-2021

Opening date: October 11, 2021 Closing date: October 29, 2021

Positions: (3) Custodial-I (Saipan)
(1) Maintenance/Custodial-I (CPA Rota)
(1) Ports Police/ARFF-I (CPA Tinian)

Employment Application must be accompanied with a copy of all required diploma/certificates and/or official sealed transcripts, original copy of recent police record not more than six (6) months old, original copy of U.S. Department of Defense Form DD214 for retired members or veterans of our Armed Forces, and other documents as required for the position. Public Law 11-70 requires that all male applicants age 18 to 25 years old must submit documentation evidencing his registration with the Federal Selective Service System. All applications and required documents must be submitted to the ***CPA Administration Office, 2nd Floor Arrival Building, Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport or CPA Administration Office Tinian International Airport or Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport.*** Failure to provide any of the required documents will result in automatic disqualification. Certain vacancies may require written and/or physical test. Selected applicants will be subjected to pre-employment drug screening, 10-year Criminal History Record Check and 49 CFR Part 1542.209(d) Requirements. CPA reserves the right to waive or implement other qualifications to meet its needs. The deadline for submission of applications and required documents to the CPA Administration Office (Saipan) or at the Tinian International Airport or Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport is no later than **5:00 P.M. on Friday, October 29, 2021.**

Detailed information on qualifications and position descriptions for the above positions may be picked up along with the application form from Monday-Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., except on holidays, at the CPA Administration Office (2nd Floor) of the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, Arrival Terminal or CPA Admin. Office at the Tinian International Airport or at the Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport. For additional information, please contact the CPA Human Resources Office by email at lorna.tenorio@cnmiports.com or by phone at (670)237-6500.

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CHRISTOPHER S. TENORIO
Executive Director

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COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION

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ITB22-CHCC/FINANCE-002

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: OCTOBER 22, 2021 TIME: 10:00AM (CHST)

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/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION

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/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

‘It’s a dream come true’

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
The U.S. District Court for the NMI swore in 11 new U.S. citizens following a naturalization ceremony last Tuesday.

After nearly 50 long years, Beatriz Caisip Villacrusis was finally recognized as a citizen of the nation she has chosen to call home for much of her life.

Following the naturalization ceremony last Tuesday at the U.S. District Court for the NMI, Villacrusis said it was truly a dream come true to finally become a naturalized citizen. “I arrived on Saipan back in 1976. It’s a dream come true. At last, I am finally a U.S citizen,” she said.

The ceremony was not only a milestone in Villacrusis’ life, it was also a bonding experience she shared with her daughter-in-law, Jovie Sagum Villacrusis, who was also naturalized with her.

“I am so honored to share this experience with my mother. I’m so proud of her, of us, and I am happy and excited for what’s to come,” she said.

Jovie Villacrusis said that she waited 10 years before she was naturalized. Although the wait was significantly shorter than her mother-in-law’s, it was longer than most spouses. “But we’re finally here, and I’m so thankful to my husband, my family, my friends, and everyone who supported me along the way,” she said.

Aside from the mother-daughter duo, nine others were sworn in by U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona Manglona last Tuesday, including Leticia Garcia Abigania, Lucia Dela Cruz Andrey, Tingting Chu Doggett, Jonnalyn Betonio Mendiola, Vilma Comia Pangelinan, Lani Lopez Sablan, Marcelo Menrige Sumalnap, Rocelia Reyes Tenorio, and Reymundo Tambauan Zinampan.

The keynote speaker for the group was Northern Marianas Humanities Council executive director Leo Pangelinan, in honor of the state holiday, Commonwealth Cultural Day.

Pangelinan encouraged the newly naturalized citizens to embrace who they are and to continue to share their cultural backgrounds despite changing their citizenship.

“Today, we celebrate your success in acquiring the knowledge and values that in part define American culture. As you make this transition in your life, I want you to know that I and many others in our community appreciate your rich cultural heritage and would ask that you continue to share this very important part of who you are. Becoming a U.S. citizen does not mean that you leave your culture or language behind. As you forge ahead with your dreams and life goals, my hope for you is that you are able to take with you and share with others every bit of that which makes you unique,” he said.

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
Mother-daughter duo Beatriz Villacrusis, left, and Jovie Villacrusis pose for a photo following their naturalization ceremony last Tuesday at the U.S. District Court in Gualo Rai.

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT
HR 2021-01

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The Application for Employment, detailed job description, qualification requirements and other information may be obtained online at www.**developcnmi.com** or at the CEDA offices during regular business hours from 8:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M., Monday through Friday, except CNMI holidays.

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All applications must be complete and submitted to the CEDA main office in Saipan or emailed to admin@developcnmi.com.

For more inquiries, please contact Ms. Christy Kintol, Office Manager at (670) 234-6245 ext. 310 or by email at c.kintol@developcnmi.com

/s/ Manuel A. Sablan
Executive Director

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PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) Board of Directors, through its Chairperson of the Board, is hereby giving notice that the Regular Board Meeting is scheduled on Friday, October 15, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. at the NMHC Conference Room, Saipan. The public is welcome to submit written or oral comments regarding the agenda below. Individuals interested in attending the meeting and needing special accommodations are requested to contact NMHC in advance. In compliance with the CNMI COVID-19 guidelines, Face-masks must be worn, social distancing will be enforced, and not more than ten (10) people will be allowed in the conference room during the course of the meeting.

I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS
  a. Call to Order
  b. Roll Call
  c. Adoption of Agenda

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS

III. CORPORATE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

IV. OLD BUSINESS
  a. CDBG-DR Updates

V. NEW BUSINESS
  a. Amend Small Purchase Threshold and Bonding Requirements
  b. Amend Procurement Protest
  c. Conflict of Interest Form and Waiver
  d. REAC Inspection Results
  e. New Housing Programs

VI. LEGAL COUNSEL’S PENDING/ONGOING REPORT

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION
  a. Personnel Matters

VIII. OTHER MATTERS

IX. ADJOURNMENT

(Notes: Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 13 (a)(7) and Section 13(c), the Board may vote to meet in executive session.)

/s/
Merced (Marcie) M. Tomokane
Chairperson of the Board

Tinian Field Office
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Fax: (670)433-3690

“NMHC is an equal employment and fair housing public agency”

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Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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EDITORIAL

Janet Yellen is right. The debt limit is dangerous and should be abolished

Congratulations to Congress for avoiding economic catastrophe for another month or so. The Senate voted Thursday night to increase the nation's debt limit by $480 billion, and the House is expected to do the same early next week. That's just enough money to pay America's bills until Dec. 3, when Congress will likely have this fight all over again while the nation teeters on the edge of default.

Can we get off this idiotic merry-go-round?

The semi-regular debt limit fight is politics at its worst. Why? Because raising the federal debt limit should be a routine, obligatory act by Congress to fulfill the government's basic duty to pay the bills run up by the very same Congress.

Instead, the debt limit has become a prop in Washington's Political Kabuki Theater. One party—usually the GOP—refuses to vote to raise the debt limit, while bemoaning the amount of federal spending and the size of the deficit. The other party scrambles for strategies or concessions to get the votes. While the standoff plays out, the U.S. inches closer to the moment when it runs out of cash and can no longer borrow to meet its financial obligations, which include Social Security payments and reimbursing hospitals for Medicare patients.

A default could be devastating to the American economy, which is still struggling from the pandemic shutdowns, and trigger a recession. But even if Congress somehow gets its act together and raises the debt ceiling again before December, the constant brinksmanship and last-minute scrambling undermines confidence that U.S. Treasuries are a stable, predictable investment. That could hurt the nation's economy in the long run, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has warned.

"It's led to a series of politically dangerous conflicts that have caused Americans and global markets to question whether or not America is serious about paying its bills," Yellen said Thursday on CNN. That's why she has endorsed eliminating the debt limit. And she's right.

Congress established the debt limit more than a century ago. In theory, it is supposed to encourage fiscally responsible behavior. In practice, the debt limit is largely ignored until the U.S. hits it. That's why the current version makes no sense. The debt limit doesn't actually stop Congress from running up debts. It merely stops the Treasury from borrowing the money needed to pay federal creditors, pensioners, investors and others to whom Uncle Sam owes money.

The debt limit is an irresponsible way to manage the nation's obligations, and it's time to get rid of it.

There is a value in having some mechanism to constrain spending, or at least force a meaningful debate over whether the expense justifies the debt. Over the years, there have been countless proposals to reform or replace the debt limit, such as those from the U.S. Government Accountability Office and the nonpartisan anti-deficit group, the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget. The core recommendation is to more closely link decisions about spending and borrowing.

But for now, the best course for Congress is to repeal the debt limit, and put an end to this dangerous brinksmanship.

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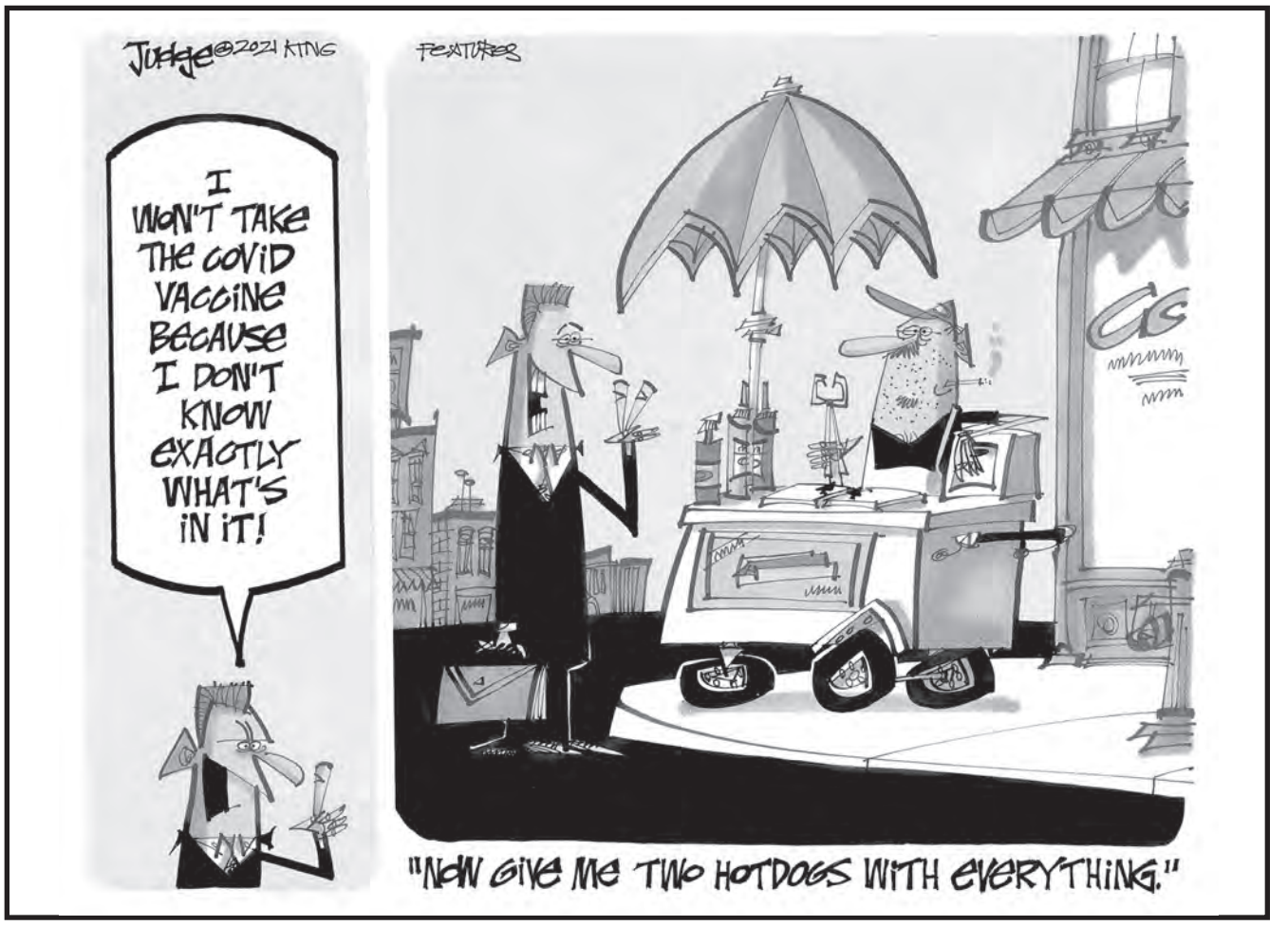
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I WON'T TAKE THE COVID VACCINE BECAUSE I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT'S IN IT!
"NOW GIVE ME TWO HOTDOGS WITH EVERYTHING."

You signed up to be a teacher. Then you had a baby. Then COVID-19 hit. And then…

By JILL LITWIN
Chicago Tribune

Jill Litwin is the author of the blog Mommy On and has been published in Her View from Home and Milk Drunk.

When you signed up to be a teacher, you wanted to make a difference. You loved the aha moments when your students finally "got" the concept. You laughed when they misread Rodeo Dr. as rodeo doctor. You cherished their wisdom when you taught about prejudice and they couldn't comprehend why the color of someone's skin mattered.

And then you had your own baby.

Every day of your three-month leave, you wished something magic would happen granting you three years off instead. But you live in the real world, where diapers and doctors require money and benefits. And so you snuggled your baby, whispered "Mommy loves you," and pulled away from day care a sobbing mess, feeling guilty for leaving and then guilty again for being unable to fully show up for your students with your heart shattered in a zillion pieces.

But somehow you pieced your heart together and you showed up anyway. Because you viewed your class as others' sons and daughters. You had never-ending amounts of patience and encouragement. You worked in your small group corner to make sure even the strugglers understood because you desperately wanted no child left behind.

When your students went to music, you responded to emails, graded papers, planned, and then planned more. Maybe you checked on your baby, but maybe you didn't because it was too hard, and you learned to compartmentalize.

At the end of the day, you felt beat up and bogged down, but somehow you mustered up energy for your baby, whom you hugged tightly when reunited. Then bath and story time plus the nightly magic light show. You made it to the best part of your day, earning every bit of these moments.

And then just when you think you've got the whole teacher-mom thing down, COVID-19 hits.

And now, after a year of remote or hybrid learning, everyone is back in school. You signed up to be a teacher, but you became a soldier armed with hand sanitizer and a mask. All day you remind your students, who must be seated in rows three feet apart, to keep their face covering on because your main job is keeping them safe, and because you're terrified of bringing sickness home. You dodge emails from the superintendent about another classroom COVID-19 case, feeling sorry for that teacher, but also relieved it's not you.

Until your classroom becomes the one in the email.

That day, the principal comes in, swarming around the desks closest to where the student who went home sick sits. She's calling out names and telling kids to pack up. They are close contacts of a confirmed case and they must leave immediately. In an instant, the whole front section of your classroom is gone. You're shocked when you even miss the student who's a constant handful, because you're a teacher and a mom and it's impossible not to confuse the two. The teacher in you cares about their learning, but the mom in you cares about them. And it's too much.

You want the pressure from administration to stop. They forget that times still aren't normal and expect Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) scores to increase, without acknowledging while after learning at home for a year, students don't remember how to behave and are academically two years behind.

I feel you. I hear you.

Being a teacher mom was always hard, but teacher momming during a pandemic is unbearable. Graduate school never prepared you for this, and while the kids take formal surveys about their social-emotional well-being, never once is there a check-in for the teachers. You deserve to be asked how you're doing, and to be heard when you say you're struggling.

And the worst is the pressure you put on yourself. To be the teacher, but also the psychologist, judge, supervisor and a million other things before going home and playing your most important role—mom. You worry you're not doing enough for your students and also that you're failing your own kids. And when you're really drowning, you consider a mental health break, but then you reconsider, because substitute plans mean more work.

And so you press forward. Because you are strong. And because this year is making you stronger. And you remind yourself what you told your students on the first day of school:

"Just because things are this way now doesn't mean they will be forever. We must accept what we cannot change and go with the flow."

Then you remind yourself that people are only given as much as they can handle, and while teacher momming will never be easy, it will seem easier after having done it through the worst of times.

I understand you. Because I am you.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

STORIES MATTER: They connect us

By JOVIC TUQUERO
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Four boys sat by the table nearest to the sidewalk. They were all silent at first until the first boy spoke out, "How was your day, guys?" The third boy replied with a smile on his face. "Bro, there was this old man who stole my clothes at the beach." The others started to chuckle. "I tried to chase after him, but he was a bit too fast to catch up to." The second boy then said, "How could he have been faster than you?" The third boy laughed and replied, "Hey man what could I possibly do when he stole my sneakers as well." The three other boys laughed alongside the third boy, soon revealing that they too had their clothes taken as well.

Stories make us laugh, they make us weep and cry, they can make us get angry as well but, most importantly, stories can bring us together. There are times in our life where we can empathize with others. A story can provide similar experiences, a story that brings interest into one's life or pass down morals and values to others. We have all been at that point in our lives where even just one joke or conversation could make two new people the same or opposite personalities friends or more than that. A joke even starts off as a story or a meaning behind it as well as starting a conversation. Even telling others how one meets another is a story in itself. Friendship is created through connection and love for one another. Stories are the same way for they are a major part of how friendships are formed.

When you go out and meet someone in public, start a conversation off with a story. This is a great way of letting others know what kind of person you are. The way you sound, provide details, and set the tone of the story could persuade the person to find greater interest in you. You wouldn't need to be the one telling a story. First pay attention to the speaker and understand what it is they are trying to convey the story. A great way to tell that a connection between two people is formed is when they immerse themselves in the story. This is where they find themselves in this loop of interest that sparks a friendship between one another. A story can persuade others in a variety of ways, they think of the story as humor, a moral to be learned, or an understanding of the person.

A story can bring many people alike together. It portrays similar values, goals, or experiences that others can empathize with. It helps us envision a better connection with others and shape a future friendship or relationship. Stories matter and they can bring the best or worst out of everyone. All it takes is a voice and a meaning. So...what's your story?

Jovic Tuquero is a Saipan Southern High School student.

STORIES MATTER: They add meaning when life seems random

By JULIA JINANG
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

In our lives, the paths we travel are unpredictable. They twist and turn toward events we could have never imagined, and they feel inconsistent time-wise. There will be moments where life just seems filler, and there will be questions that appear to hold no answer. Stories, however, which allow us to jot down memorable experiences or craft fictional sagas can lead us to the answers we yearn for. Whenever life seems lackluster and questionable, the absorption and creation of stories can help remind us of what makes life meaningful.

From time to time, life's intense questions fill up faster than their needed answers. Countless people have dilemmas about themselves and beyond. When we try to solve such dilemmas, we turn over every rock to find an answer—such as a place to belong to or a motive to be driven by. When we rise empty-handed, it feels like our fate has hands that can throw the most pointless and confusing of decisions. We may even feel like we have hit rock bottom once we have listened to the voice asking us the dreaded question: what our purpose is.

Although there can be no definite answers to the nerve-wracking questions we ask ourselves, storytelling can help nudge us in the right direction of self-revelation. When authors write or tell a story, usually they place a piece of themselves in their work. On the other hand, when a story is read, the reader will most likely absorb or be influenced by the author's piece. Simply, when we come across a story, we either gather or release new emotions, ideas, and perspectives. Doing so can help us understand ourselves and give us a sense of contentment.

Even though the views that stories provide won't grant us full understanding, they'll leave us with something to remember. Stories are etched into our mind, teaching us lessons or sparking emotions in us. For some tales, we know them for their guidance or awareness. For others, we know them just because of the impressions they leave on us, like joy, sorrow, anger, or humor. The emotional stories one remembers also gives meaning to life, making it worthwhile and enjoyable.

Sometimes, life throws us the most ridiculous of occurrences. Those times are confusing and they leave us with losing more than we gain. Stories help us, however, by allowing us to share and learn about other's experiences. They are there to unlock or at least give us a peek at life's deepest ideas. At the very least, they are meant to be enjoyed and remembered.

Julia Jinang is a 10th-grade student at Grace Christian Academy.

EDITOR'S NOTE: These essays are some of the entries submitted for the "Stories Matter" contest of the Marianas Writers Movement, an essay-writing student competition that focuses on stories of the Marianas, as part of the celebration of October as Humanities Month.

STORIES MATTER: They entertain us

By MARYGRACE LEGASPI
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Stories. Things that have been passed down generation to generation. Stories are all around us, from what we've read for school, for fun, or even gossip from our parents. I found myself resorting to reading stories on sites like Wattpad, Ao3 or Webtoon during Typhoon Yutu and it has been my comfort since there was no Wi-Fi connection to watch videos or do assignments properly.

Stories are like a doorway to a parallel universe. The readers can imagine that they are the character in the story they like. That way, they can put themselves in the perspective of the character and have some raw emotions regarding the story. For some of us who cannot imagine themselves as a character, simply reading can bring us joy. From coming up with theories, to crying over cliffhangers, and sharing our favorite genres with other readers, they are all so entertaining.

I find it so fascinating how stories from long ago are still referenced. If I could, I would want to know how the first ever story started, and how it progressed as it got told to different people with different understandings of it. It's probably not possible, but it would be nice to be able to, especially since it could've been changed over the years because of factors like cultures, geography, perspective, etc. Some of my personal favorite genres of stories are romance, fantasy, horror, or psychological stories that really make you think hard.

The biggest satisfaction of a reader and avid watcher of shows and movies is when the live-action adaptation of a book accurately depicts how the book is like and follows the storyline properly. I haven't come across those types of movies or shows in a while, so I just stick to reading the book. I feel like the reason why stories entertain me so much is because of the thought process the writer must've had, or that it has elements that make us feel the same way the characters do, or it gives us a chance to get creative and base our own adaptations on that certain story—no plagiarism involved, of course.

In conclusion, stories matter, they have always mattered, and they are a great source of inspiration and entertainment for everyone.

MaryGrace Legaspi is a 14-year-old, ninth-grade student at Marianas High School.

STORIES MATTER: Inspiration and motivation

By CHLOE SABLAN
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

"Why do stories matter?" some people may ask. Well, stories matter because stories can teach inspirational and motivational words. They make you view the world differently and change your way of thinking. Stories teach you important life lessons and motivate the reader to do what they love.

A lot of people are always in different situations that give them anxiety or make them lose focus the whole day. Whenever I'm in those situations I always think positively. I tell myself that I'll be okay and that it won't last forever. Thinking positively really changes everything like your mood and helps you focus better on things you need to get done. I always worry about school but lately I've been thinking positively because at the end of the day that thing you were worrying about will just end up as a useless memory as you move forward. Moving forward is always a sign of progress. Never stop doing the things you love, even if you have to do the things you don't like to do, like school or chores. Just keep moving forward and don't give up because at the end you'll receive the best reward after.

Every day I feel like I'm not doing good enough and feeling like things I'm doing are not worth it, but then I remember it is worth it since the good things are going to come my way the more I try and work harder. During my childhood there were a lot of negative things happening and just thinking about it makes me anxious, but ever since I started working hard all my stress and anxiety are slowly going away. This week has been my toughest week since I had a lot of work and so much stress. I pushed forward and got all my work done hoping all this stress will go away and it did. It's always good to push yourself to do things you love no matter if it's embarrassing if no one supports you. And in conclusion of stories matter is because they teach you a good lesson. They give you motivation and inspire you to keep going forward and keep working hard to achieve your goal.

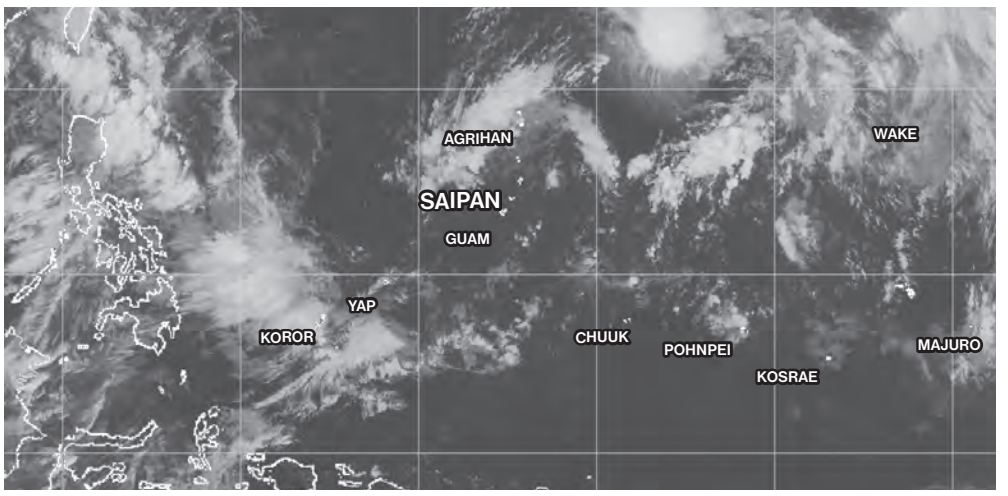
Chloe Sablan, 14, is a ninth-grade student at Grace Christian Academy.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers and thunderstorms. Southwest winds 5 to 15 mph. Lows around 77. Highs near 88. Chance of showers 20 percent.	Mostly cloudy with scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms. Southwest winds 5 to 15 mph. Highs near 87. Lows around 77. Chance of showers 30 percent.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers and thunderstorms. Highs in the upper 80s. Lows in the upper 70s. Chance of showers 20 percent.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers and thunderstorms. Highs in the upper 80s. Lows in the upper 70s. Chance of showers 20 percent.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. Lows in the upper 70s. Highs in the upper 80s. Chance of showers 20 percent.
88º / 77º	87º / 77º	80º / 70º	80º / 70º	80º / 70º

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 8:17 AM, MONDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2021

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Guam Doppler weather radar shows scattered showers to the northwest of the Marianas Waters. Elsewhere in the radar coverage, showers are isolated. The Ipan buoys reveals combined seas of 6 to 8 feet which includes a west swell of just 3 or 4 feet, 2 or 3 foot wind waves, and a northeast swell which makes up the balance.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	87 / 79 °F
Palau	Light Rain Shower	82 / 78 °F
Yap	Cloudy	87 / 79 °F
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	92 / 81 °F
Pohnpei	Cloudy	89 / 78 °F
Kosrae	Mostly Cloudy	88 / 80 °F
Majuro	Cloudy	84 / 80 °F

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:08 AM	5:57 PM
Friday	6:08 AM	5:56 PM
Saturday	6:08 AM	5:56 PM
Sunday	6:08 AM	5:56 PM
Monday	6:09 AM	5:55 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	12:14 AM	1:43 PM
Friday	-	1:14 AM	2:32 PM
Saturday	-	2:12 AM	3:17 PM
Sunday	-	3:06 AM	3:57 PM
Monday	-	3:58 AM	4:35 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Fair/Wind	60 / 48 °F
Beijing	Fair	68 /55 °F
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy/Wind	82 / 77 °F
Honolulu	Mostly Cloudy	80 / 77 °F
London	Fair	60/ 48 °F
Los Angeles	Clear	60 / 50 °F
Manila	Mostly Cloudy	85 / 78 °F
Melbourne	Fair	81 / 77 °F
Miami	Clear	81 / 77 °F
New York	Clear	65 / 63 °F
Osaka	Mostly Cloudy	82 / 68 °F
Paris	Clear	59 / 41 °F
Busan	Mostly Cloudy	74 / 65 °F
Rome	Fair	73 / 49 °F
Salem	Clear	67 / 61 °F
San Francisco	Clear	55 / 52 °F
Seoul	Sunny	76 / 59 °F
Tokyo	Rain Shower	65 / 62 °F
Washington, DC	Cloudy	67 / 63 °F

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
12:22 AM	High Tide	1.56
8:19 AM	Low Tide	-0.13
4:12 PM	High Tide	1.79
9:56 PM	-	1.19

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.

■ Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.

■ Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.

■ Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.

■ Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.

■ Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.

■ Create a household plan of action, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html

■ Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

■ Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.

■ Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

■ Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:

• Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.

• Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

• Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

• Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561 These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mpand, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

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E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 5, 2021

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	6:45am	7:25am	1, 3, 6
UA117	9:45am	10:25am	2, 4, 5, 7

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

UA183	7:05pm	8:50pm	2, 5
UA183	7:25pm	9:10pm	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	6:45am	9:10pm	1, 3, 6 via Guam
UA117/183	9:45am	8:50pm	2, 5 via Guam
UA117/183	9:45am	9:10pm	4, 7 via Guam

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

7C3406	3:10PM	6:55PM	6
TW9308	3:20PM	8:00PM	4
OZ6243	4:00PM	7:40PM	6

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	5:00am	5:41am	1, 3, 6
UA174	8:00am	8:41am	2, 4, 5, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA184	9:50pm	3:55am+1	2, 5
UA184	10:25pm	4:30am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA184/174	9:50pm	5:41am+1	2, 5 via Guam
UA184/174	10:25pm	5:41am+1	7 via Guam
UA184/174	10:25pm	8:41am+1	1, 3, 4, 6 via Guam

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3405	8:30AM	2:10PM	6
OZ6233	9:00AM	2:30PM	6
TW9307	10:00AM	2:20PM	4

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF MAY 18, 2021

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Daily
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Daily
1303	1:30PM	2:00PM	Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
1304	3:30PM	4:00PM	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Daily
3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Daily
3103	1:30PM	3:00PM	Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
3104	4:30PM	5:00PM	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1205	11:00	11:15	Daily
1206	12:00	12:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1207	13:00	13:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily
1212	17:00	17:15	Temporarily Unavailable

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
2101	7:30	7:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2105	11:30	11:45	Daily
2106	12:30	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2107	13:30	13:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily
2112	18:30	18:45	Temporarily Unavailable

USDOE revamps public service loan forgiveness program

The U.S. Department of Education announced last week an overhaul of the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program that it will implement over the next year to make the program live up to its promise.

This policy will result in 22,000 borrowers who have consolidated loans—including previously ineligible loans—being immediately eligible for $1.74 billion in forgiveness without the need for further action on their part. Another 27,000 borrowers could potentially qualify for an additional $2.82 billion in forgiveness if they certify additional periods of employment.

All told, the department estimates that over 550,000 borrowers who have previously consolidated will see an increase in qualifying payments, with the average borrower receiving another two years of progress toward forgiveness. Many more will also see progress as borrowers consolidate into the Direct Loan program and apply for PSLF, and as the department rolls out other changes in the weeks and months ahead.

"Borrowers who devote a decade of their lives to public service should be able to rely on the promise of Public Service Loan Forgiveness. The system has not delivered on that promise to date, but that is about to change for many borrowers who have served their communities and their country," said U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. "Teachers, nurses, first responders, servicemembers, and so many public service workers have had our back especially amid the challenges of the pandemic. Today, the Biden Administration is showing that we have their backs, too."

The changes announced last week include:

- A limited PSLF waiver that allows all payments by student borrowers to count toward PSLF, regardless of loan program or payment plan. This waiver will allow student borrowers to count all payments made on loans from the Federal Family Education Loan Program or Perkins Loan Program. It will also waive restrictions on the type of repayment plan and the requirement that payments be made in the full amount and on-time for all borrowers. To receive these benefits, borrowers will have to submit a PSLF form by Oct. 31, 2022, which is a single application used to certify employment and evaluate a borrower for forgiveness.

Borrowers who currently have FFEL, Perkins, or other non-Direct Loans, will get the benefit of this limited waiver if they apply to consolidate into the Direct Loan program and submit a PSLF form by October 31, 2022. The waiver applies to loans taken out by students.

- Allowing active duty service members to count deferments and forbearances toward PSLF. This solves a problem for service members who have paused payments while on active duty but were not getting credit toward PSLF.
- Automatically providing credit toward PSLF for military service members and federal employees using federal data matches. The department will implement data matches next year to give these borrowers credit toward PSLF without an application.
- Reviewing denied PSLF applications for errors and giving borrowers the ability to have their PSLF determinations reconsidered. These actions will help identify and address servicing errors or other issues that have prevented borrowers from getting the PSLF credit they deserve.

These changes represent a significant step in the department's efforts to transform the PSLF Program. The department is exploring additional steps, such as partnerships with employers, to continue to make this process easier for borrowers. The department earlier released materials for the first session of negotiated rulemaking, including proposals to make lasting changes to make it easier for borrowers to make progress toward PSLF.

Federal Student Aid will make more information available to borrowers at StudentAid.gov/PSLFWaiver. In the coming weeks and months, the department will communicate directly with borrowers about these changes to PSLF to help borrowers understand how they may benefit and any actions they may need to take. Borrowers should ensure that they have accounts on StudentAid.gov and that their contact information there is up to date.

Including the borrowers eligible for immediate forgiveness under these actions, the Biden-Harris Administration has now approved more than $11.5 billion in loan cancellation for over 580,000 borrowers. ***(PR)***

GMS celebrates Multicultural Day with the theme 'Unity in Diversity'

After a week of nonstop rain, the clouds finally let up and the sun came out last Thursday morning, Oct. 7, to greet Green Meadow School's students who were dressed in various cultural outfits as part of the school's celebration of Multicultural Day.

GMS students wore different cultural attires, prepared song and dance performances, and displayed booths showcasing the culture they had chosen as part of the whole-day event that highlighted the importance and significance of cultural diversity.

The day started with a parade of nations, with each class, themed around a specific nation's culture, marched in their costumes and flags around the campus grounds. After a short break, students showcased their costumes and different cultural attire, with each class taking the stage in turns to display their cultural and well-made homemade costumes. Some students wore traditional Japanese kimonos, some wore islander hat and skirts woven from leaves, some wore Indian saris and headdress shawls, while others wore Filipino *barongs*.

Following the costume contests, classic nursery rhymes and songs were performed by the elementary students in different languages such as French, Japanese and Spanish. The middle school students performed two dances—one a Filipino dance called "Carinosa" and a modern dance choreographed by a Filipino dance group.

Prizes and rewards were given to students for best costumes for each class and best display booths. Additional contests had students taking photography and painting pictures to highlight the theme "Unity in Diversity."

The day wrapped up with students visiting each other's booths and activities. Middle school students prepared some small carnival-style games and activities for their fellow students. ***(PR)***

MWM hosts 'Stories Matter' student writing contest

The Marianas Writers Movement wants to focus attention on the stories of the people of the Marianas this month, October, in recognition of Humanities Month and is sponsoring a student essay contest on the topic, "Stories Matter" and the submissions are in. Nearly 80 students from high schools submitted their essays supporting the conclusion that stories matter—to share culture, to entertain us, and to connect us together.

Marianas Writers Movement will award prizes to five randomly selected student essayists at its October writing workshop. We also want to encourage people to come to the workshop. If you want to write short stories, novels, memoirs, family histories, poems or comics or graphic novels, we can help. Don't wait. Write with us. We'll also be having write-ins during November, National Novel Writing Month.

Find out more at https://MarianasWritersMovement.org. Read the students' essays, and you'll understand why your stories matter. ***(PR)***

Business

Odoca is Islander Rent A Car's new sales manager

By BEA CABRERA
beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

Islander Rent A Car CNMI welcomes a new sales and marketing manager, Simon Odoca, who officially started last Oct. 4, and attended his first Saipan Chamber of Commerce general membership meeting last week at the Hyatt Regency Saipan Ballroom.

Odoca, who used to be in the sales and marketing industry in Guam, hopes to use his work experience and learnings in his current job. "This is my first time to work [on] Saipan and work for Islander but I have extensive experience in the transportation and airline industry. For 20 years, I worked as general manager at Nissan car rental and then was the director for operations of the sales for Budget car rentals and I managed the Pacific region that includes the CNMI, Micronesia, and Guam," he said.

With his new role at Islander, Odoca hopes to help the company expand the market "so I will be going out to the community to hopefully get more local businesses. From what I see right now, the brand Islander is quite strong in the local market but we see the need to work on the military sector more, which is really greatly increasing in the CNMI," he said.

Odoca

Islander Rent A Car is available on Saipan, Tinian, Rota, and Guam. It offers sedans, SUVs, and sports cars like the Mustang. Customers are guaranteed safety and convenience at specials rates that are within budget.

"With Island having branches on all the islands, it's a great opportunity to expand into the tourism market and I am excited to grow the market here…There's a lot of potential in the CNMI," Odoco said. "Saipan is indeed a good destination and now with the ongoing Travel Bubble tapping the Korean market, and we want to be able to tap them too. Capturing a part of the tourism market is what I have been doing in Guam and that is also one of the plans for the CNMI."

Odoco looks forward to exploring more of the CNMI, either for work or as a new resident. "It's literally leisurely pace here…but I'm here to work so it should be an easy adjustment for me and, besides, Guam is very close," he said.

Islander rent a car human resources officer Rudelia Renojo welcomes Odoco to the team. "We are happy that he is on board and we welcome him. With Mr. Odoco's work experience, we look forward to a positive year ahead," she said.

For more information, call Islander Rent A Car on Saipan at (670) 234-8233 or (670) 288-0373. On Tinian, call (670) 4333025. On Rota, call (670)532-0901. Email: islander@pticom.com and website: Islanderrentacar.com

China exports up 28% in Sept.; surplus with US at $42B

BEIJING (AP)—China's import and export growth slowed in September amid shipping bottlenecks and other disruptions combined with coronavirus outbreaks, according to customs data reported Wednesday.

The report showed exports rose 28.1% to $305.7 billion. That was slightly faster than the 26% increase logged in August, and better than economists' forecasts. Imports rose 17.6% to $240 billion, less than the previous month's 33%.

Custom officials check documents with a man at a container port in Yantai in eastern China's Shandong province Tuesday, Oct. 12, 2021. AP

This year's trade figures have been distorted by comparison with 2020, when global demand plunged in the first half after governments shut factories and shops to fight the pandemic. Chinese exporters reopened after the ruling Communist Party declared the virus under control in March 2020, while its foreign competitors still were hampered by anti-virus curbs.

"China's foreign trade performance is leading the field among the world's major economies, and China has seen an increase in its international market share," said Li Kuiwen, a spokesman for the customs agency.

"Taking into account the impact of the high base of foreign trade in 2020, the growth rate of imports and exports may fall in the fourth quarter of this year, but the overall upward trend of China's foreign trade will not change, and rapid growth throughout the year is still expected," Li said.

House sends debt limit hike to Biden, staving off default

WASHINGTON (AP)—Members of the House on Tuesday pushed through a short-term increase to the nation's debt limit, ensuring the federal government can continue fully paying its bills into December and temporarily averting an unprecedented default that would have decimated the economy.

The $480 billion increase in the country's borrowing ceiling cleared the Senate last week on a party-line vote. The House approved it swiftly so President Joe Biden can sign it into law this week. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen had warned that steps to stave off a default on the country's debts would be exhausted by Monday, and from that point, the department would soon be unable to fully meet the government's financial obligations.

Nation

US to reopen land borders in November for fully vaccinated

WASHINGTON (AP)—The U.S. will reopen its land borders to nonessential travel next month, ending a 19-month freeze due to the COVID-19 pandemic as the country moves to require all international visitors to be vaccinated against the coronavirus.

Vehicle, rail and ferry travel between the U.S. and Canada and Mexico has been largely restricted to essential travel, such as trade, since the earliest days of the pandemic. The new rules, to be announced Wednesday, will allow fully vaccinated foreign nationals to enter the U.S. regardless of the reason for travel starting in early November, when a similar easing of restrictions is set to kick in for air travel into the country. By mid-January, even essential travelers seeking to enter the U.S., like truck drivers, will need to be fully vaccinated.

Senior administration officials previewed the new policy late Tuesday on the condition of anonymity to speak ahead of the formal announcement.

Both Mexico and Canada have pressed the U.S. for months to ease restrictions on travel that have separated families and curtailed leisure trips since the onset of the pandemic. The latest move follows last month's announcement that the U.S. will end country-based travel bans for air travel, and instead require vaccination for foreign nationals seeking to enter by plane.

Both policies will take effect in early November, the officials said. They did not specify a particular date.

The new rules only apply to legal entry to the U.S. Officials cautioned that those seeking to enter illegally will still be subject to expulsion under so-called Title 42 authority, first invoked by former President Donald Trump, that has drawn criticism from immigration advocates for swiftly removing migrants before they can seek asylum. One of the officials said the U.S. was continuing the policy because cramped conditions in border patrol facilities pose a COVID-19 threat.

Wildfire shuts highway, forces evacuations

SOLVANG, Calif. (AP)—Evacuation orders were expanded Tuesday for a growing wildfire driven by intense winds that has shut down a key Southern California highway for more than a day.

At least 200 firefighters battled the Alisal Fire, which had scorched 21 square miles (54 square kilometers) along coastal Santa Barbara County and was only 5% contained, county fire officials said.

The fire erupted Monday on a ridge and blasted toward the ocean, forcing the closure of U.S. 101, the only major highway on that section of the coast. Evacuation orders and warnings were in place for several areas of the lightly populated region.

AP
In this photo provided by the Santa Barbara County Fire Department, firefighters extinguish flames Tuesday afternoon, Oct. 12, 2021, that have spotted ahead of the fire front along Highway 101 southbound at Vista Point, north of Refugio State Beach in Santa Barbara County, Calif.

"The fire is burning in dense chaparral and is being pushed by strong winds and growing at a rapid rate of speed," a fire update said Tuesday. Gusts reached 70 mph (113 kph) in some areas, officials said.

In Northern California, fire crews increased the containment of a blaze that destroyed 25 mobile homes, 16 RVs and a park building at the Rancho Marina RV Park in Sacramento County. At least 20 structures were still threatened, according to the River Delta Fire District.

ACROSS THE NATION

Coroner: Gabby Petito strangled 3-4 weeks before body found

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP)—Cross-country traveler Gabby Petito was strangled, a Wyoming coroner announced Tuesday. Petito, 22, died three to four weeks before her body was found Sept. 19 near an undeveloped camping area along the border of Grand Teton National Park in remote northern Wyoming, Teton County Coroner Dr. Brent Blue said in a news conference. It wasn't clear if the determination might lead to additional charges against Petito's boyfriend and traveling partner, Brian Laundrie, who is considered a person of interest in her disappearance and remains unaccounted for. Blue declined to say more about the autopsy or the case overall, saying he was prevented by Wyoming law that limits what coroners can release.

3 employees killed in shooting at postal facility in Memphis

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP)—Two U.S. Postal Service workers were fatally shot Tuesday at a postal facility in Memphis and a third employee identified as the shooter died from a self-inflicted gunshot, authorities said. It was the third high-profile shooting in or near that west Tennessee city in weeks. U.S. Postal Inspector Susan Link said the three postal workers were found dead after the shooting at the East Lamar Carrier Annex in a prominent Memphis neighborhood. FBI spokeswoman Lisa-Anne Culp said the shooting was carried out by a third postal service worker, who shot him or herself. No identities or motive were released by Link or Culp at a brief news conference late Tuesday afternoon.

Asia

Rescuers carry the body of a victim caught in a landslide caused by Tropical Storm Kompasu in Baguio city, northern Philippines on Tuesday Oct. 12, 2021. AP

PH storm leaves 11 dead

BAGUIO, Philippines (AP)—A tropical storm set off landslides and flash floods as it barreled over the tip of the northern Philippines, leaving at least 11 people dead and seven missing, officials said Tuesday.

More than 6,500 villagers were evacuated from homes in several towns and cities swamped by floods and battered by pounding rains and wind that toppled trees and knocked down power.

Tropical Storm Kompasu was last tracked over the South China Sea heading toward China's Hainan island and later Vietnam with sustained winds of 100 kilometers (62 miles) per hour and gusts of 125 kph (78 mph), government forecasters said.

Six villagers died in landslides that hit their houses in the northern mountain province of Benguet and three others in the region remain missing. A security guard was swept away by strong waves while inspecting a seaport and drowned in Claveria town in Cagayan, disaster response officials said.

In western Palawan province, four people died and four others went missing in flash floods in Narra town, which was drenched by monsoon rains enhanced by the storm. The coast guard its personnel rescued elderly residents and children trapped in submerged homes Monday and carried them through floodwaters in a rural village in Brooke's Point town in Palawan.

About 20 storms and typhoons each year lash the Philippines, which also lies in the so-called Pacific "Ring of Fire," a region often hit by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, making the Southeast Asian archipelago one of the most disaster-prone in the world.

ASIA BRIEFS

China pledges $230 million for biodiversity fund at UN meet

BEIJING (AP)—China on Tuesday pledged about $230 million to establish a fund to protect biodiversity in developing countries. President Xi Jinping, speaking by video to a U.N. conference in the southwest Chinese city of Kunming, said that China would put in 1.5 billion yuan and called on other countries to contribute to the Kunming Biodiversity Fund. The weeklong meeting marks the formal start of a new round of global talks on protecting the world's plants and animals from extinction and preserving the ecosystems they depend on. A second and final session that will try to agree on targets for the next 10 years is scheduled to be held in Kunming from April 25 to May 8 next year. The world has failed to reach most of the current 10-year goals, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, set in Japan in 2010. Greenpeace, the environmental group, said countries need to focus on not just setting new targets but also financing and meeting them.

North Korean soldier in blue generates buzz on social media

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—A North Korean soldier clad in a super-tight blue outfit in a state media photo has generated a buzz on social media, with some calling him "a superhero," "a captain DPRK," or "a rocket man." He was among nearly 30 soldiers who posed for a photo with leader Kim Jong Un during an exhibition of weapons systems on Monday. North Korea published photos of the event the following day. They all mostly wore olive green uniforms, the most common color for North Korean military uniforms. Only two of them wore different colors—the one in the blue outfit and the other in a navy-blue uniform, which isn't that unusual. Kim wore a dark suit. Some Twitter users in South Korea, the U.S. and elsewhere joked about his appearance, saying he looks like a "human cannon ball," or the North Korean equivalent of Captain America.

Qatar diplomat emphasizes engagement with Taliban at forum

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP)—Qatar's diplomatic point man on Afghanistan said Tuesday countries should engage the country's new Taliban rulers, warning that isolation could lead to instability and a wide-reaching security threat, as happened when al-Qaida used the country as a base to plot the 9/11 attacks. Mutlaq bin Majed al-Qahtani, Qatar's special envoy for counterterrorism and mediation in conflict resolution, said he's held conversations with the Taliban about combating terrorism. The Taliban, he said, are committed to fighting the Islamic State group, which is increasingly active in Afghanistan, and ensuring the country is not used by terrorist organizations. The sides have also discussed pressing issues related to the role of women in society, girls' access to education and the importance of an inclusive government. Qatar's policies and insights on Afghanistan are watched closely because the tiny gas-rich nation has played an outsized role in the war-torn country in the wake of the U.S. withdrawal.

World

Energy agency urges greater global push to cut emissions

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP)—The International Energy Agency is urging governments to make stronger commitments to cut greenhouse gas emissions at an upcoming U.N. climate summit, warning the world is not on track to meet environmental goals and that new investment in clean energy was needed to "jolt the energy system onto a new set of rails."

The Paris-based international organization said Wednesday in its annual world energy outlook that great strides have been made to move away from fossil fuels by relying on more wind and solar energy, while electric vehicles are setting sales records.

But the economic rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic also has seen an increase in the use of coal and oil, the report said, as well as a leap in emissions. Burning fossil fuels produces carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas that scientists blame for climate change.

"The world's hugely encouraging clean energy momentum is running up against the stubborn incumbency of fossil fuels in our energy systems," said Fatih Birol, executive director of the 30-country IEA.

Governments at the summit needed to "give a clear and unmistakable signal that they are committed to rapidly scaling up the clean and resilient technologies of the future. The social and economic benefits of accelerating clean energy transitions are huge, and the costs of inaction are immense."

The report said the recovery was putting major strains on parts of the energy system, leading to sharp rises in prices for natural gas, coal and electricity as worldwide energy demand is set to regain the ground lost last year during the pandemic.

Electricity demand in particular had come "roaring back" in Asia, leading to a rise in the use of coal-fired plants. Such energy crunches were a prelude of more disruption to come if investment in new sources of energy did not increase, according to the report.

Representatives of more than 200 countries will gather for the 26th U.N. Climate Change Conference, known as COP26, from Oct. 31 to Nov. 12 in Glasgow, Scotland, to discuss new targets for cutting or curbing the growth of emissions that contribute to climate change.

The goal under the 2015 Paris climate accord is to limit the rise of global temperatures to well below 2 degrees Celsius (35 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels, while pursuing efforts to limit the rise to 1.5 degrees.

The U.N.'s scientific committee on climate change has said emissions must be cut to net zero—when greenhouse gases are balanced out by their removal from the atmosphere—by 2050 to reach the 1.5-degree limit.

Birol said governments' current pledges would result in only 20% of the reduction by 2030 needed to reach net zero emissions by 2050. He said investment in clean energy and infrastructure would have to triple over the next decade "to jolt the energy system onto a new set or rails." Most of that spending would have to come in emerging and developing economies, where financing can be scarce and which are still facing a public health crisis.

There was remains only a "narrow but achievable" pathway to net zero, according to the agency.

Follow AP's coverage of climate change issues at https://apnews.com/hub/climate-change

This Jan. 4, 2021 file photo released by Mexico's National Institute of Anthropology (INAH) shows the statue of a female figure unearthed in Hidalgo Amajac, in nearby Alamo Temapache, Veracruz state, Mexico. AP

Pre-Hispanic woman sculpture replaces Columbus in Mexico

MEXICO CITY (AP)—A replica of a mysterious pre-Hispanic sculpture of an Indigenous woman was chosen Tuesday to replace a statue of Christopher Columbus on Mexico City's most prominent boulevard.

The statue was unearthed in January in the Huasteca region, near Mexico's Gulf coast. It's known as "The Young Woman of Amajac," after the village where she was found buried in a field. But nobody really knows who the stone sculpture was supposed to depict.

The National Institute of Anthropology and History said at the time the statue was similar to depictions of a fertility goddess of the Huastec culture. But institute archeologists also said she may have been a member of the elite, or part of the governing class.

The replica will be as much as three times the size of the six-foot (2 meter) original, which is being displayed in Mexico City's Museum of Anthropology. City authorities decided the Columbus statue should be moved to a less prominent site, and should be replaced by an Indigenous woman because they had been under-represented.

The aesthetics of the replica will be a stark change from the Columbus statue. "The Young Woman of Amajac" is pre-Hispanic in style with an open-eyed stare because the colored stones that were probably originally inserted in her eye sockets have been lost.

Environment

DIVING AGAINST DEBRIS WITH DIVEWISH

The Grotto revamped!

Site reopens after over a year of closure due to renovations

By IVA MAURIN
CORRESPONDENT

Grotto renovations and cleanup with DIVEWISH, along with the other volunteers and private companies under the Public-Private Partnership program of the Governor's Council of Economic Advisers. Photo contributed by DIVEWISH.

Tagged as one of the best cavern dive sites in the world, the Grotto has finally reopened to the public after over a year of being closed due to renovations.

Saipan Tribune drove up to Marpi last weekend to check on the Grotto fever the island is now having, especially among local divers who have been waiting to yet again explore the crystal clear deep blue waters of Saipan's most popular dive spot.

The Grotto's park has been given a much-needed facelift—its steps and railings fixed, its viewing deck resurfaced and revamped, its restrooms cleaned, and a new, inviting "Grotto" sign affixed.

Grotto's fresh look is all thanks to the public-private partnership formed between the Governor's Council of Economic Advisers, and the five private companies that adopted the site—DIVEWISH, Saipan Adventure, Tasi & the Ali'is, Loco & Taco, and Bibong Corp.

We had the fortune to sit down and talk with Woong Choi, DIVEWISH' chief executive officer and PADI instructor, on the recent beautification initiative at the Grotto.

He said that, aside from fixing the steps and railings and cleaning the restrooms, other improvement projects done at the site include the pavilion and parking lot painting, trash pickups, lawn services, and underwater purification work.

According to Choi, even before the PPP was formed, many "who loved Saipan and Grotto"—groups and even individuals—have been picking up trash at the site. But it was the repairing and painting that was the biggest issue given the cost of the paint and materials for the project.

"Many companies began coming together to form a bigger group, with the intervention of the local government, which gave an opportunity to improve the site officially. As the group got bigger, painting and repairing became possible as well. …As the saying goes, 'One arrow is easily broken, but the bundle of arrows is not.' It is nearly impossible to improve the site as a small group, but many companies forming bigger groups and the intervention of the government, as well as volunteers joining the events made it possible in a year," Choi said.

Dive against debris

Aside from helping improve structures at the Grotto, DIVEWISH, with volunteers from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., has also been diving—picking up trash underwater for the past several months.

This is aligned with the Dive against Debris program, conducted officially last Sept.18 during the Professional Association of Diving Instructors' Aquatic World Awareness Responsibility Education Week.

DIVEWISH is an officially-registered PADI dive resort, and a 100% AWARE partner. Environmental protection training is included in all four of their dive certification curricula. DIVEWISH also donates monthly to PADI AWARE and to environmental groups per certification issued.

"Prior to PADI AWARE Week, with the approval of the local government, unofficial Dives against Debris were conducted once a month by the instructors of DIVEWISH, and with the aid of the volunteers from FEMA and CHC," Choi said. "As many people do not have the opportunity to see and experience the situation underwater, DIVEWISH instructors have gathered certified local volunteers and have led the Dive against Debris. The events have been posted on the official PADI and PADI AWARE site as well as [on] Instagram, and have gained attention globally."

Common debris picked up underwater include plastics, rebar, clothing, signboards, beer bottles, and cans, among others.

"Although the Grotto was closed to the public during the pandemic, many debris were picked up. During our first event, about 200kg of debris and wastes were collected, and about 150kg of plastic, cans, and other debris were collected by 12 volunteers during [the] PADI AWARE Week alone," Choi said.

DIVEWISH has included the "Dive against Debris" to the Grotto improvement program, and will continue to clean underwater.

Begin with simple things

"People tend to not think about things that they can't see. Seventy percent of the Earth is surrounded by water. Climate and temperature changes can occur depending on the underwater environment. In my opinion, experiencing underwater firsthand rather than reading books about how the corals and underwater creatures affect the earth's environment will probably make it easier to understand," Choi said.

As a PADI instructor, Choi said that scuba diving education contains not just dive skills to explore, but provides opportunities to learn, understand, protect, and respect the environment.

"We need to think about not simply just the ocean or the Earth, but also about how people affect the environment. I've been diving in Saipan since 1996, and I can completely say that the ocean has been different since then and now," Choi said, adding that corals and many sea creatures have decreased in population.

He added that the temperature and the season have changed underwater, and with the ocean and the corals absorbing most of the sun's heat, which cools the Earth and provides appropriate life cycle to all, the death of corals breaks the food cycle of life underwater.

"The corals are dying, which are food sources and homes to many fish. This affects the bigger fish as they eat smaller fish. The ocean does not absorb the heat as much due to the destruction of the underwater environment. It causes the Earth's temperature to rise and then causes the glaciers and the ice to melt in the North and South poles, which then elevates the sea level."

Choi added that people who have stayed on Saipan long enough have seen and experienced the rising sea level. "It may seem it's already too late, but we need to begin protecting the Earth that we live in. Many creatures are labeled endangered and this isn't only an issue for the underwater environment, but an issue for all humanity. It may not take a long time to destroy the environment, but it would take long time and effort to restore."

Protecting the marine world is something that is not exclusive to divers, but is a shared responsibility of everyone in the community.

"We can begin with simple things, such as picking up trash after yourself and also, picking up trash in sight. Next, we can begin finding interests and recognizing the environment. I think being an example to the next generation would be an effective method," he said.

Choi has also been gathering data for an environmental education campaign as part of his vision to share his thoughts with children, with hopes that the future generations will be able to enjoy and see the beauty of nature, just as we do today.

For more information about volunteering with, or diving with DIVEWISH, visit their website at https://divewish.com and Instagram at https://instagram.com/divewish, or contact them via +1 (670) 789 8231.

Mother's judgment hinders daughter's recovery

DEAR ABBY: I'm a woman in my mid-30s without much family. I'm an only child and have no relationship with my father. The relationship I have with my mother is extremely toxic.

I have suffered my entire life from a severe shopping addiction. I recently relapsed, and I'm trying to recover financially. I can't afford counseling right now, and I can't ask for help from my mother because of how horribly she shames me about my addiction. In fact, I have realized that having her in my life at all is a massive trigger because she constantly puts me down for not being financially stable as an adult. She also constantly compares me not only to herself when she was my age, but to others in my generation.

How can I tell her I no longer want her in my life for the sake of my mental health and addiction recovery?

PULLING BACK IN TEXAS

DEAR PULLING: I'm not sure if you are already aware of it, but many people use shopping as a way of coping with depression. You may be one of them. Before taking on that difficult conversation, do some research and find out what county mental health services may be available in your area. They are usually offered on a sliding fee scale. There are also 12-step programs for compulsive shoppers that you might find helpful. Please go online and research some of them as well.

As to what to say to your mother, try this: "Mom, I know I need help for my shopping addiction. I am seeking it now. While I am in recovery, you won't be hearing from me for a while, so don't worry. We will talk eventually."

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: I lost my best friend of 32 years in a car accident three months ago. She was the best friend a person could possibly have. She would not only give you the shirt off her back, but she would then ask what else you needed. We had been through so much together. This would be the kind of thing I would turn to her for comfort while going through. She was cremated, and I didn't see her before that, so I didn't get closure. I feel so empty and unfinished. What do I do?

NOT WELL IN THE SOUTH

DEAR NOT WELL: Please accept my sympathy for the loss of your dear friend. The circumstances of your loss make it more difficult, but it is not insurmountable. Because there is no "place" you can go to mourn her, you might find closure by writing her a letter telling her all the things you weren't able to say before her death. Then choose a private site you both used to enjoy, read it aloud to her and burn it, knowing she will always be alive in your heart. If this is not sufficient, consider asking your physician or religious adviser about a grief support group to help you work this through.

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
FROM UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

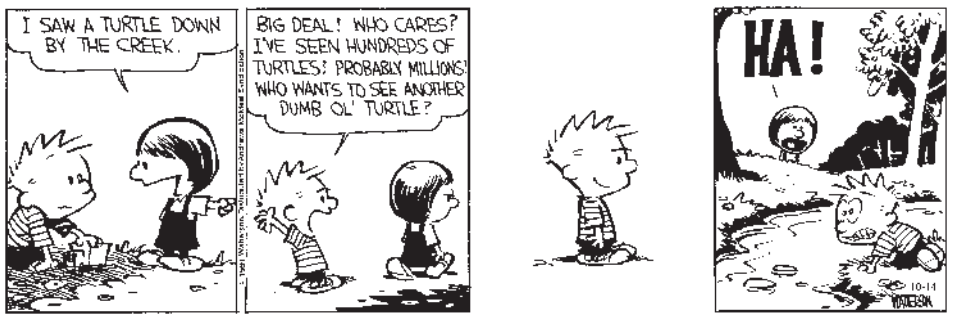
Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

What teens need to know about sex, drugs, AIDS and getting along with peers and parents is in "What Every Teen Should Know." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Teen Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

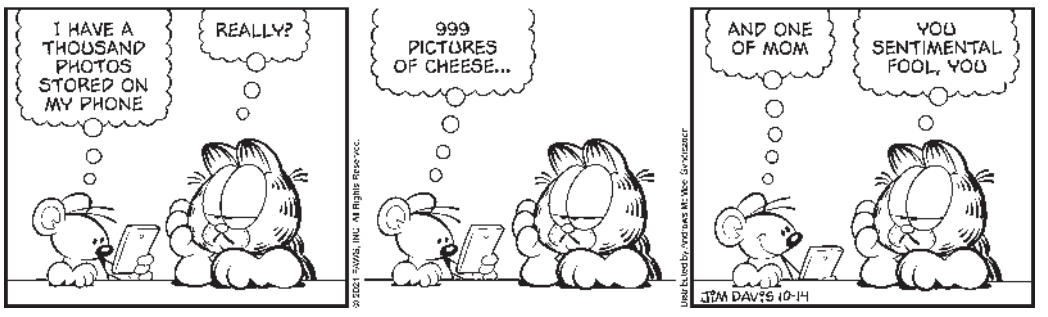
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


I SAW A TURTLE DOWN BY THE CREEK.
BIG DEAL! WHO CARES? I'VE SEEN HUNDREDS OF TURTLES! PROBABLY MILLIONS! WHO WANTS TO SEE ANOTHER DUMB OL' TURTLE?
HA!
10-14
WATERSON

Garfield®

By Jim Davis


I HAVE A THOUSAND PHOTOS STORED ON MY PHONE
REALLY?
999 PICTURES OF CHEESE...
AND ONE OF MOM
YOU SENTIMENTAL FOOL, YOU
JIM DAVIS 10-14

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

YOU HEARD NICK SAY HIS FIRST WORD?
YEP HE SAID "GUMBO".
THIS IRKS ME. I WANTED TO BE THERE FOR IT.
THIS IS ABOUT NICK, NOT ABOUT WHO HEARD IT OR WHAT HE SAID.
YET I STILL WANT TO POUR THIS CEREAL ON YOUR STUPID HEAD.
RUNNER-UPS ARE SO TOUCHY.
10-14

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

DO WE WANT AN EXTENDED WARRANTY ON THE CAR?
OH, OUR FUEL PUMP IS ABOUT TO GO OUT. ASK IF THEY COVER THE FUEL PUMP.
DO YOU COVER THE FUEL PUMP?
THEY COVER EVERYTHING BUT THE FUEL PUMP.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Watch chain
4 Tub session
8 Prince of India
12 Citric beverage
13 Austen heroine
14 Abba of Israel
15 Turncoat's action
17 Blood vessel
18 Crone
19 "Billy Budd," for one
21 Ladybug, e.g.
24 Knight's address
25 Takes too much, briefly
26 Shade tree
28 Clock faces
32 Staffer
34 Beer barrel
36 Sci-fi race
37 Kingdom
39 Chapeau
41 Agt.'s take
42 Chow down
44 Compassion
46 Bright red
50 Can. neighbor
51 Took the train
52 Gambler's challenge
56 Divisible by two
57 Redact
58 Roof ornament
59 Left on a map
60 Chemists' rooms
61 Levy

DOWN

1 "Terrif!"
2 Verse by Pablo Neruda
3 Maryland city
4 Snoopy, for one
5 Comic Schumer
6 IRS enforcer
7 Head lights?
8 Daydream
9 First victim
10 Hoosegow
11 "Downton Abbey" role
16 Snitch
20 YouTube upload (Abbr.)
21 Piglet's dad
22 Actress Falco
23 Wapiti
27 "Whatever"
29 Type of soup
30 Bonkers
31 Poses
33 Factor
35 Hiatus
38 More, to Manuel
40 Razzes
43 Beach accessory
45 Airport org.
46 Ship's staff
47 Peregrinate
48 Mid-month date
49 Zilch
53 Pen tip
54 Ecol. watchdog
55 Box office buys, slangily

Solution time: 24 mins.

P	U	B		E	M	U	S		H	A	T	E
O	H	O		A	B	R	A		E	G	A	D
D	O	N		R	A	N	G	O	R	O	U	S
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A	R	E		E	A	R	N	A		L		S
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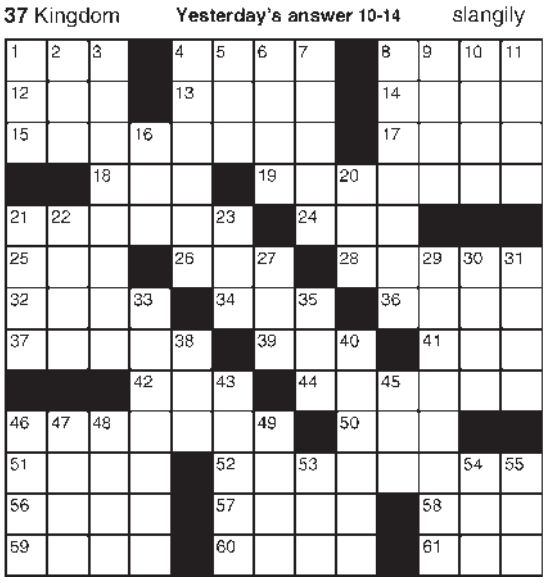
Yesterday's answer 10-14



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Mekai Curtis, 21; Usher, 43; Natalie Maines, 47; Lori Petty, 58.

Happy Birthday: Put more into your surroundings. Comfort and functionality will support peace of mind and efficiency, leaving more time to explore avenues that pique your imagination. Expand your interests, friendships and skills, and you will discover something that makes you feel alive. Express your desires, and be open to personal improvements, romance and embracing what life has to offer. Your numbers are 8, 14, 21, 24, 33, 36, 47.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Don't feel you have to pressure others to get what you want. Do what you do best, and everything will fall into place. A proposal you make will draw interest. A romantic gesture will bring you closer to someone you love. ✪✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Don't get mixed up in someone else's business. Take on responsibilities that lead to a higher income, better cash flow and less debt. Learn from experience. Refrain from letting others call the shots. Pay attention to someone you love. ✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Look at the possibilities, then set your course of action. A disciplined approach to how you handle responsibilities will do wonders for your reputation. Socializing with peers will give insight into how to get the support required to advance. Romance is featured. ✪✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Follow a path that allows you to use your skills uniquely. Taking a different approach to how you handle money will lead to greater control and less outside interference. Don't waste time arguing; do what's best for you. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Map out your course and take flight. Don't waste your time following others. Take advantage of any opportunity that comes along, and you'll be calling the shots instead of playing second fiddle to someone. Live, love, laugh and be happy. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Learn from the changes others make. Be a good student and a better teacher. Set examples for others, and you will feel good about the decisions you make. Be good to yourself, and protect against fatigue, injury and illness. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Reconnect with someone you miss. A conversation will brighten your day and give you the reality check you need to recognize how far you've come. Set new priorities, and then excess baggage that is weighing you down and holding you back will diminish. ✪✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Take a wait-and-see approach to avoid getting caught up in someone's drama. Observation will help you make wise decisions when change is required. Take the road less traveled, and you'll discover what you want to do next. ✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Put on your hard hat, and take on physical tasks that need attention. What you accomplish will raise eyebrows and your reputation. A chance to up your income or move into a position that excites you looks promising. Romance is in the stars. ✪✪✪✪

CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Listen to what others have to say, and you'll learn valuable information that will help you maneuver your way through a situation that has the potential to affect your livelihood. Don't feel pressured to make a premature move. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* You can get ahead if you set up a safe long-term investment that will also add to your comfort and ease pent-up stress. Sharing with someone who has similar goals will lead to a better future. Romance is featured. ✪✪✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Keep your business, passwords and plans to yourself. You will accomplish the most if you don't share your intentions with others. Don't let a change someone makes throw you off guard. Finish what you start, and leave the past behind you. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are impatient, bold and efficient. You are sensitive and insightful.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

6		1	2			4
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		5			6	7
	5					3 8
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1		8			2	
			4	8		
7				9	5	6

Difficulty Level ★★★ 10/14

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

9	3	7	4	6	1	5	2	8
8	5	2	9	3	7	6	1	4
4	6	1	8	2	5	3	9	7
7	1	6	2	4	9	8	3	5
3	8	9	1	5	6	7	4	2
5	2	4	3	7	8	9	6	1
2	9	3	5	8	4	1	7	6
1	7	8	6	9	2	4	5	3
6	4	5	7	1	3	2	8	9

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

AN AXIOM OR TWO Solution: 10 letters

L	S	C	I	S	Y	H	P	R	O	O	F	S	T	A
E	A	C	S	Y	S	T	E	M	O	D	S	I	W	E
U	S	S	I	M	S	N	R	E	D	O	M	T	E	N
N	D	T	R	T	T	L	M	U	H	T	R	O	W	I
D	E	E	A	E	S	S	A	S	T	N	I	O	P	F
E	T	R	O	B	V	I	O	U	S	H	N	L	P	E
R	P	S	E	E	L	I	T	C	Q	K	L	S	O	D
S	E	U	L	A	V	I	N	A	N	E	N	S	S	C
T	C	B	B	A	S	I	S	U	T	O	N	N	T	I
O	C	T	T	Ⓜ	Ⓡ	Ⓞ	Ⓕ	H	I	S	O	A	U	N
O	A	R	A	E	L	C	N	T	I	I	L	E	L	O
D	M	A	X	I	M	E	A	I	T	D	A	M	A	S
L	A	C	I	G	O	L	C	O	N	C	E	P	T	S
S	S	T	A	T	E	U	N	E	U	G	R	A	E	E
T	H	E	O	R	Y	R	S	E	I	D	U	T	S	L

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Accepted, Argue, Basis, Clear, Concepts, Cost, Define, Equals, Establish, Form, Ideas, Lesson, Logical, Maxim, Means, Modern, Notions, Obvious, Physics, Points, Postulate, Proof, Real, Reasoning, Relations, Rule, Sonic, State, Statistics, Studies, Subtract, System, Tell, Terms, Theory, Truth, Understood, Universal, Unknown, Values, Wisdom, Worth

Yesterday's Answer: Mistake

The NEW **Treasury 43** can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480.

Freeman HR sends Braves to NLCS, 5-4 over Brewers

ATLANTA (AP)—Freddie Freeman and the Atlanta Braves will get another chance to finish the job they came agonizingly close to achieving a year ago.

It doesn't matter at all that they had fewer wins than any other playoff team.

Freeman hit an improbable, tiebreaking homer off Milwaukee closer Josh Hader with two outs in the eighth inning and the Braves advanced to the NL Championship Series for the second year in a row, finishing off the Brewers 5-4 on Tuesday night.

The Braves won the best-of-five Division Series three games to one, advancing to face either the 107-win San Francisco Giants or the 106-win Los Angeles Dodgers with a trip to the World Series on the line.

"I've had a lot of cool moments in my career," Freeman said. 'I think that's gonna top 'em all. Hopefully it's not the last one and I've got a couple more in these playoffs."

The game was tied at 4 when the Brewers brought on Hader to make sure it stayed that way. The hard-throwing lefty struck out Eddie Rosario and Dansby Swanson, but he couldn't get past the 2020 NL MVP.

Freeman caught up with an 84-mph slider, launching a 428-foot drive into the seats in left-center — only the fourth homer all season off Hader, and first since July 28.

Freeman became the first left-hander to homer off Hader since Jason Heyward in 2020.

"The first two guys went down, so I just tried to get a pitch up and he hung a slider and I put a good swing on it," Freeman said. "There was no rhyme or reason to it."

Freeman celebrated wildly on his way around the bases, and popped back out of the dugout for a curtain call as the crowd of 40,195 roared. He became the first player in franchise history to hit a go-ahead home run in the eighth inning or later in a series-clinching win, ESPN Stats & Info said.

"When Freddie hit that ball, I mean, I lost my poise. Everybody in the dugout was going crazy," teammate Ozzie Albies said.

Will Smith pitched a scoreless ninth for his third straight save in the series, getting Christian Yelich to look at strike three with a runner on first for the final out. Tyler Matzek claimed the win with a perfect eighth.

"Freddie! Freddie! Freddie!" the crowd chanted as the Braves celebrated in the center of the field.

Despite having fewer wins (88) than any other playoff team — and even two teams that didn't make the postseason — the NL East champion Braves are headed back to the NLCS for the second season in a row.

AP

Atlanta Braves Freddie Freeman celebrates after Game 4 of a baseball National League Division Series against the Milwaukee Brewers, Tuesday, Oct. 12, 2021, in Atlanta.

A year ago, manager Brian Snitker's team had a 3-1 series lead, only to lose three straight games to the eventual World Series champion Dodgers.

Atlanta hasn't been to the World Series since 1999, and hasn't won it all since 1995.

But this team, which floundered under .500 until Aug. 6, overcame so much adversity to clinch its fourth straight division title in the final week.

A season-ending injury to star Ronald Acuña Jr. and legal issues that sidelined Marcell Ozuna forced the Braves to acquire a whole new outfield before the trade deadline.

It paid off.

"We've been feeling really good about ourselves in the second half, playing really good baseball," Freeman said. "We carried it over to the postseason."

After the Braves and the Brewers combined for just nine runs through the first 30 innings of the series, the offenses suddenly came to life in the fourth.

The NL Central champ Brewers touched home for the first time since Game 1, getting RBI singles from Omar Narváez and Lorenzo Cain to snap a 22-inning scoreless streak. Narváez's hit also broke an 0-for-20 performance by 95-win Milwaukee with runners in scoring position in the series.

But the Braves bounced back in the bottom half, even though Milwaukee may have caught a huge break on a deflected foul popup that was ruled a catch even through it appeared to hit the dirt. Pinch-hitter Eddie Rosario came through with a two-out, two-run single to center.

Milwaukee surged ahead again in the fifth, this time on Rowdy Tellez's second two-run homer of the series. His first, way back in the seventh inning of Game 1, had produced the Brewers' only runs of the series until Tuesday. This second one off Huascar Ynoa was a massive shot, plopping into the fountain beyond the center-field wall.

Back came the Braves, who put up another two-spot in their half. Joc Pederson drove in one with a forceout and Travis d'Arnaud delivered a two-out single to right to bring home another.

Pitching on three days' rest, Charlie Morton lasted just 3 1/3 innings for the Braves. He surrendered four hits and was charged with Milwaukee's first two runs.

The Brewers decided not to use ace Corbin Burnes, who had gotten the win over Morton in Game 1. He was all set to go in Game 5 in Milwaukee.

Unfortunately for the Brewers, they don't play again until 2022.

"We're all really disappointed," manager Craig Counsell said. "In the end, we had big goals. We didn't quite get there. But we did win 95 games. It's a special group. They did accomplish some special things."

Milwaukee starter Eric Lauer made his first appearance of the series, but didn't get much farther than Morton. He went 3 2/3 innings, also charged with two runs on four hits.

Dodgers 7, Giants 2

In Los Angeles, Mookie Betts homered and drove in three runs, Will Smith also went deep and the Los Angeles Dodgers defeated the San Francisco Giants 7-2 on Tuesday night to force a decisive Game 5 in their NL Division Series.

The 107-win Giants host the 106-win Dodgers on Thursday night, with the winner advancing to face Atlanta in the NL Championship Series. The Braves eliminated Milwaukee earlier Tuesday.

San Francisco won the NL West by one game over the Dodgers in an historic race that went down to the final day of the regular season. Now, these storied rivals are set for a winner-take-all showdown.

"I think it's only fitting," Los Angeles ace Walker Buehler said.

The wild-card Dodgers managed just five hits during a 1-0 loss in Game 3 — the second time they were shut out in this series — to put the defending World Series champs on the brink of elimination. Los Angeles had that many by the second inning Tuesday and pounded out 12 in all to back a brief but effective outing from Buehler on three days' rest.

Buehler went to manager Dave Roberts as early as the Dodgers' 9-2 victory in Game 2 and said he wanted the ball in Game 4 to start on short rest for the first time in his career. The right-hander allowed one run and three hits in 4 1/3 innings. He struck out four and walked two on 71 pitches.

"I actually felt great," Buehler said. "Probably the best I have in the second half of the year. We'll see how I feel tomorrow, but for tonight I felt pretty good."

After giving up a leadoff single to Evan Longoria and walking pinch-hitter Steven Duggar, Buehler exited to a standing ovation from 52,935 blue towel-waving fans.

The Dodgers chased starter Anthony DeSclafani in the second. He gave up two runs and five hits and struck out two.

The Giants ran through six pitchers by the fifth, leaving them with just three relievers. By the seventh, only backup catcher Curt Casali was available off the bench and he pinch-hit in the eighth.

Astros 10, White Sox 1

In Chicago, it was Jose Altuve, Carlos Correa and Alex Bregman once again.

The Houston Astros are going to the AL Championship Series for the fifth straight year. Their October-tested stars led the way.

Altuve hit a three-run homer and scored four times, and Houston eliminated the Chicago White Sox with a 10-1 victory in Game 4 of their AL Division Series on Tuesday.

"We don't get tired of this moment," Correa said. "They're special, and we perform our best when October comes."

Correa and Bregman each hit a two-run double as the Astros bounced back from Sunday night's 12-6 loss with their usual relentless brand of baseball. Michael Brantley had three hits and two RBIs.

Next up for Altuve and company is Game 1 of the ALCS against former Astros bench coach Alex Cora and the Boston Red Sox on Friday in Houston. The Red Sox eliminated Tampa Bay with a 6-5 victory in Game 4 on Monday night.

"We're playing another good team," Altuve said.

It's Houston's second ALCS under 72-year-old manager Dusty Baker, whose club got the best of 77-year-old Chicago skipper Tony La Russa. Baker replaced A.J. Hinch, who was fired in the fallout from the Astros' 2017 sign-stealing scandal that also resulted in a one-year ban for Cora.

A testy La Russa argued with umpire Tom Hallion after he felt Houston reliever Kendall Graveman hit reigning AL MVP José Abreu intentionally with two out in the eighth. Abreu was plunked 22 times during the regular season.

"There is a character choice there that they should answer for," La Russa said. "Stupid, too.

"I'll be interested to see if they admit it. If they don't admit it, then they're very dishonest."

Baker, who has sparred with La Russa in the past, said his team did not throw at Abreu intentionally.

"There was no reason for us to hit Abreu," Baker said. "He hadn't done anything to us."

Gavin Sheets connected for Chicago, becoming the third rookie in franchise history to homer in a postseason game. But Carlos Rodón was knocked out in the third inning of his first start since Sept. 29, and the AL Central champions left eight runners on base.

The White Sox also lost in the first round of the 2020 playoffs, dropping two of three in Oakland. Before this year, the franchise had never made consecutive postseason appearances.

"It was a fun ride. Ended a little short," Rodón said.

The Astros are looking for the franchise's second championship after winning it all in 2017, a title that still evokes a strong reaction around the game after the team was punished for using electronics to steal signs.

The crowd at Guaranteed Rate Field chanted "Cheater! Cheater!" at times during the two games in Chicago, and White Sox reliever Ryan Tepera implied late Sunday night that Houston may have been stealing signs in Games 1 and 2.

But the Astros, used to dealing with boos since fans returned to the stands this season, brushed it all off.

"We've been constantly bombarded by negatives, especially on the road," Baker said. "But these guys, they come to play and they love each other."

Nets won't play Irving until he meets vaccine requirement

NEW YORK (AP)—Kyrie Irving can keep refusing to get the COVID-19 vaccine.

He just won't play for the Brooklyn Nets until he does.

The Nets announced Tuesday that Irving would not play or practice with them until he could be a full participant, ending the idea that he would play in only road games.

Irving hasn't said he isn't vaccinated, asking for privacy when he spoke via Zoom during the team's media day on Sept. 27.

But he had rarely been with the team in New York, where a mandate requires professional athletes playing for a team in the city have to be vaccinated against COVID-19 to play or practice in public venues.

"Kyrie's made it clear that he has a choice in this matter and it's ultimately going to be up to him what he decides," general manager Sean Marks said. "We respect the fact that he has a choice, he can make his own and right now what's best for the organization is the path that we're taking."

Teams aren't allowed to reveal private details of players' health. But asked Tuesday if Irving was vaccinated, Marks said: "If he was vaccinated, we wouldn't be having this discussion. I think that's probably pretty clear."

Marks said he and owner Joe Tsai together made the decision, adding that it came through discussions with Irving and his associates.

"Kyrie loves to play basketball, wants to be out there, wants to be participating with his teammates," Marks said. "But again, this is a choice that Kyrie had and he was well aware of that."

Irving wasn't even eligible to practice with the Nets in New York until Friday, when the city told the team that its training facility was considered a private venue.

AP

Brooklyn Nets guard Kyrie Irving looks up at the fans at TD Garden after they defeated the Boston Celtics in Game 4 during an NBA basketball first-round playoff series in Boston, in this Sunday, May 30, 2021, file photo.

Irving then joined the team at an outdoor practice Saturday and worked out with the Nets on Sunday, but didn't play in Brooklyn's exhibition game at Philadelphia on Monday.

Coach Steve Nash had said that the Nets knew they were going to be missing Irving for some games. For now, at least, it will be all of them.

With Kevin Durant, James Harden and Irving, the Nets were considered a favorite to win the NBA title. They were eliminated by the Milwaukee Bucks in the second round of last season's playoffs after Irving sprained his ankle and missed the final three games.

Marks conceded that the Nets weren't as strong without Irving, though they may still be good enough.

"At this point in time, the Nets have more than enough to win a championship," said Richard Jefferson, a former Nets star who now works for YES Network. "I think adding Kyrie makes them, in my opinion, a heavy favorite and that's just kind of is what it is. With Kyrie this team can win 55, 60 games. Without Kyrie, this team could still win 55 games."

Marks wouldn't predict how long Irving would be away from the team or get into whether the Nets would consider trying to trade him.

"The hope is that we have Kyrie back," Marks said. "We'll welcome him back in open arms under a different set of circumstances and so we need to wait and see how that transpires. But in the meantime, we need to focus on the 16 players that are going to be on this roster moving forward with us."

NBA players are not required to be vaccinated, but they face more testing and restrictions on their ability to be around their teammates. The league had said that players wouldn't be paid for games they miss because they are ineligible to play.

Marks said Irving would still be paid for road games.

Teammates had said they were supportive of Irving's decision, but Marks seemed to indicate there was concern for the fan reaction. New York was hit hard in early March 2020 by the virus and the Nets' arena became a vaccination site this spring.

"There are countless, countless workers who have lost jobs because of this, there are people who have lost loved ones and so forth and as I've mentioned before this is serious," Marks said. "And we play a game of basketball. And although it's serious and we take our job extremely seriously, these are mandates that right now we don't have any control over. All we can do is abide by them and think that science and the people governing—whether it's our city, whether it's our state, whether the country — are making the right calls for us all to get back and to move on into a healthy and safer environment."

Haslem, grieving loss of his father, back at Heat practice

MIAMI (AP)—Udonis Haslem and Bam Adebayo were yelling at one another during Miami's practice on Sunday, which was a critical step for the Heat.

It meant things were normal again. Their captain is back.

Haslem — the NBA's oldest active player at 41 — returned to practice Sunday, joining his team for the first time since training camp began almost two weeks ago. He had been away while grieving the death of his father, and the absences were with the full understanding of the Heat.

"Probably the toughest time I've ever had to encounter. The biggest challenge that I've ever faced," Haslem said. "I have no problem saying that my father is and always will be my best friend. So after losing my mother 12 years ago, I just thought I had my father forever. Everything you see on the basketball court — all the catchphrases, the fire, the passion, the ability to get people to follow you and believe in themselves—that's all my dad, man. That's who he is. That's who he was."

And since 2003, his son has been that guy for the Heat.

Haslem's playing role barely exists anymore; he appeared in one game last season, finding a way to get ejected in just over two minutes of work. The Heat still want him on the roster for what he provides in terms of leadership on the practice court and in the locker room. His current contract—one year, $2.8 million—is his 10th with the Heat in a 19-year career, and there are some in the organization who want him to return for a 20th season as well.

Haslem asked teammates not to attend his father's funeral last month, not wanting to interrupt their preparation for camp. Several members of the Heat organization went anyway, including coach Erik Spoelstra, who was the primary communicator with Haslem during his absence. There were other tributes and reminders to Haslem that he was always in the team's thoughts, such as Adebayo scrapping his No. 13 jersey to wear Haslem's No. 40 in practice.

"We wanted to give him his space and respect, so the communication was going mostly through me and UD so he wasn't receiving 100-plus text messages a day," Spoelstra said. "And we're thrilled to have him back with us. It's great for us and good for him. Our gym felt great with his presence, his spirit, his voice."

Haslem's father, Johnnie Haslem, died Aug. 30 at age 70. The elder Haslem was a high school basketball standout at Miami Northwestern, went on to lead Stetson in scoring and rebounding as a senior there in 1973-74 and played at the semi-pro level after college. His son said he models his own game entirely based on the way his father played, even wearing No. 40 because his dad did.

"It's going to be hard moving forward without him, but I'm prepared," Haslem said. "My parents raised me and I've been through enough where I know I can weather any storm I'm in."

Haslem said he never considered not coming back to the Heat after his father's passing. He just needed time.

"I had to get back to a point where I could help these guys, still be a leader, still be this captain and still be the guy they expect me to be," Haslem said. "That was the journey. It wasn't easy and I'm still working on it. But today was a good day."

Celtics center Al Horford tests positive for COVID-19

BOSTON (AP)—The Boston Celtics say center Al Horford has tested positive for COVID-19.

Horford is currently in isolation and didn't travel with the team for its two-game exhibition road trip to Florida, which includes games in Orlando on Wednesday and Miami on Friday.

He is the second Celtics player to test positive this month, joining Jaylen Brown, who went into isolation on Oct. 8. First-year coach Ime Udoka also tested positive for the virus prior to the start of training camp.

A projected starter for this upcoming season, Horford is in his second stint with the Celtics after being acquired in a trade with the Thunder in June.

Hyun with back-to-back wins in CWGA

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Son Hyun duplicated her win in last month's September tourney after winning the CNMI Women's Golf Association's October tournament last Saturday, Oct. 9, at the Laolao Bay Golf & Resort.

While it's unusual for the golfer with the lowest gross score to win the monthly tournament, the Seoul, South Korea native actually turned the trick with Hyun topping the competition with her net score of 76. The 6-handicapper finished with a gross score of 82 following a 40 in the front nine and a 42 in the back nine.

"I didn't know I would win because my handicap was so low, but I'm so happy to win. I'm so thankful and happy for my group (CWGA)," said Hyun, who started playing golf in 2006.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
A total of 13 took part in the CNMI Women's Golf Association's October tournament last Saturday, Oct. 9, at the Laolao Bay Golf & Resort.

Son

Sherlyn Jones finished runner-up after the 11-handicapper carded a net 78 built around a gross of 89 (44-45), while completing the Top 3 was Jang Eun Ae, who fired a net 79. She finished with a gross of 98 after the 19-handicapper went 53 in the first nine holes and 45 in the back nine.

Hyun posted her first win in the CWGA season after winning the club's September ace last Sept. 18 at the Coral Ocean Resort in Agingan.

A total of 13 women took part in CWGA's October tournament. The rest of the players, with their net scores in parenthesis, are as follows: Lorraine Babauta (80), Yi Su Jeong (81), Nirimai Koebel (82), Rose Rohinger (82), Chang Eun Ae (82), Yuko Togawa (83), Sae Hee Kim (84), Terry Guerrero (84), Kyunga Park (85), Kim Sae Hee (89), and Lou Kim (94).

The club continues to look for new members as the 2021 season continues. For those interested in becoming a member of CWGA or for more information, contact CWGA president Yuko Togawa at 287-9856, vice president Lorraine Babauta at 287-0621, or treasurer Lou Kim at 783-7317.

Edvalson, Barman rule 12U XC championships

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Northern Marianas Athletics

It might as well be Groundhog Day in the 12U division of the 2021 PSS/NMA Cross Country Championships last Saturday at the old Saipan Country Club golf course behind Saipan Vegas.

This, after third qualifier winners Akeen Edvalson of Brilliant Star School and Sari Barman of Gregorio T. Camacho Elementary School repeated when it really counted and took home gold medals after finishing first in the 2.5-kilometer race for 12-and-under boys and girls, respectively.

Edvalson was the first to cross the finish line in his age group in 5.41. He was followed by Saipan International School's Finn Altizer with Tinian Elementary School's Jun Young Sep coming in third in 6.04.

Despite finishing second, Altizer still anchored SIS to the team win with help from Lyam Villagomez, Keoni Ruszala, and Juwon Lee.

Barman topped the girls 12U with a run of 6.04. She was followed by Saipan Community School's Alyssa Brasuel with SIS' Faith Arriola completing the Top 3 in 6.36. Arriola still led SIS to the team championship along with Eliza Culp, Lucy Woo, Beatrice Gross, and Kate Manglona.

Results of the 9U elementary school individual medal race will be published in tomorrow's issue of *Saipan Tribune*.

The Public School System partnered with Northern Marianas Athletics, the governing body of athletics in the CNMI, to organize track and field as well as cross country

Edvalson

Barman

FULL

From Page 20

triumphed over separate foes. Gallardo and Hilario beat Alvin Alvarez and Eric Peña, 21-13, 21-10, while Relativo and Gabriel upended Alvarez and Peña, 21-20, 21-9, in the loser's bracket finals.

In Group B, Hajin Oh and John Oh already advanced to the division championships with a tough 21-11, 9-21, 21-20 win over Perry Pei Li and Nap Balingit.

Lucelle Lampera and Ella Serrano set up a Group A finals in the women's B division opposite the mother-and-daughter tandem of Loyda and Angie Ito. The former advanced following an 18-21, 21-12, 21-15 victory over the Itos. The Itos, meanwhile, rebounded from that loss with a 21-18, 21-19 straight sets victory over Elna Curate and Rowena Houck in the loser's bracket finals.

Over in Group A, Windy Fernandez and Hannah Choi already booked a finals ticket in the division finals after conquering Malou Malasarte and Yoko Borja, 21-10, 21-13.

Malasarte and Hajin Ho eased themselves to the finals of the mixed doubles Group A after dispatching Chris Hilario and Windy Fernandez, 21-13, 21-16. In Group B, Lance Gallardo and Hannah Choi are also waiting for their finals opponent following a 21-15, 21-17 victory over Thomas Lim and Ella Serrano.

A total of 29 players are competing in the TakeCare Insurance Co., Inc.-sponsored tournament. Results of the C singles, doubles, and mixed doubles will be published in tomorrow's issue of *Saipan Tribune*.

WINNERS

From Page 20

Thank you all for providing opportunities for our young players," Lee said.

Motivation

The NMIBF awarded trophies to champion Grace Christian Academy, second placer Francisco M. Sablan Middle School, and third finisher Hopwood Middle School 2. Players of GCA Eagles also received medals.

GCA principal Beth Nuñez joined the Eagles in the presentation of trophies and medals and was pleased with the individual and team awards. GCA defeated FMS in the finals, 30-12.

"We are so grateful to the NMI Basketball Federation and IT&E for providing medals to each players this season. Each of the girls on the team worked hard and gave their all during the many hours of practice and during the games. It means so much to us, the girls, and their families that each was recognized for her hard work, dedication, and commitment. The championship belongs to the whole team," Nuñez said.

The FMS Napu Riders, who were seeded third in the playoffs and stunned Hopwood 2 in the semis, 13-12, were also happy to bring home a trophy despite falling short in their title bid.

"Two years ago, I was actually the coach over at Chacha Oceanview Middle School, and our team was undefeated until the very end where Hopwood beat us. My players were sad because they worked so hard in practice and played in the games with positive attitudes, but did not get anything in the end. Then I moved to FMS, and of course it seemed like we didn't have a chance especially because we didn't have subs. But the girls were proud of themselves and I do, too because they made it that far. They were happy that they were also recognized and as a coach I am happy that all our hard work was worth it," FMS head coach Nadia Murphy.

Murphy was assisted by Ezekiel Macario and Angel San Nicolas.

"Other than bringing a physical trophy back to the school, I would say having second and third place trophies alongside first place builds a positive environment while increasing team and individual confidence. It can also help with team motivation," Macario said.

Meanwhile, the NMIBF would like to thank all the participating teams and league and school officials for making the first competition in the interscholastic program a success. Next up for NMIBF and IT&E is the girls high school games later this month. ***(PR)***

LADY

From Page 20

Catherine Anua, Alyssa A. Alegre, Sunshine S. R. Sablan, Judy Andebor, Briettajayne Mendiola, and Zoey Magofna.

And speaking of the Lady Eagles 1, they completed an undefeated 11-0 season after making short work of Marianas High School 3 in the third game, 25-10, 25-5. MHS 3 finished with a 4-7 card and drew No. 6 seed GCA 2.

In the first game, Kagman High School upped its record to 3-8 after upsetting Mt. Carmel School 3, 25-22, 25-18. KHS will play MCS 1, while MCS 3 will take on automatic No. 8 seed Rota High School in the playoffs.

MHS 1 bounced back nicely from its lone loss of the season against GCA 1 last Saturday after beating MCS 2 and sister team MHS 2. The Lady Dolphins 1 beat the Lady Knights 2, 25-16, 25-10, then defeated upset-conscious Lady Dolphins 2, 25-12, 18-25, 15-9 to finish with a 10-1 record. The Lady Dolphins 1 will square off against Saipan International School 2 today, while the 2-9 MCS 2 will play 9-2 SIS 1.

MHS 2 (7-4) earlier dealt SSHS 2 its 10th loss with a 25-12, 25-16 victory. MHS 2 will square off against SSHS 1 today. The latter dropped its seventh loss in 11 games after being downed by SIS 1, 25-20, 25-20. The other playoff matchup today will pit automatic No. 7 seed Tinian High School 1 against automatic No. 10 seed and sister team THS 2.

All the matches in the playoffs are best-of-three affairs with postseason play and the championships spilling over to tomorrow, Oct. 15.

Freeman HR sends Braves to NLCS, 5-4 over Brewers

PAGE 17

Saipan Tribune
Sports

Hyun with back-to-back wins in CWGA

PAGE 19

Winners, supporters recognized

The Northern Mariana Islands Basketball Federation concluded the middle school competition in the IT&E Interscholastic Basketball League by recognizing the event's sponsors and winners.

NMIBF president James Lee and vice president David John Apatang presented a plaque of appreciation to title sponsor IT&E and two other league supporters—the CNMI Public School System and the Tan Siu Lin Foundation. IT&E executive director for Customer Operations Rob Harrel, acting Education commissioner Eric Magofna, and TSL Foundation executive director Merlie Tolentino accepted the plaques, as the three officials were joined by Northern Marianas Sports Association president Jerry Tan in the opening ceremony for the playoff round of the competition last Friday at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

"On behalf of the NMIBF board, *Si Yu'us Ma'ase* and thank you for your generosity and support to this program. IT&E is sponsoring not just one competition, but all five of them and their support made it possible for us to provide trophies and medals to the schools/teams. TSL Foundation also provided our officials uniforms, while the PSS leadership through athletic director Nick Gross continues to include basketball in the annual interscholastic program.

See WINNERS on Page 19

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

IT&E, CNMI Public School System, Northern Marianas Sports Association, and Tan Siu Lin Foundation officials pose for a photo with the Northern Mariana Islands Basketball Federation board officers during the presentation of plaques of appreciation to the sponsors and supporters of the IT&E Interscholastic Basketball League last Friday at the Marianas High School Gymnasium. Right, the IT&E-sponsored medals and trophies for the winners in the IT&E Interscholastic Basketball League are on display during the playoff round last weekend at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

Full field in B division of TakeCare tourney

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

With seven groups spread across women's singles, men's doubles, women's doubles, and mixed doubles, the B division is easily one of the most popular divisions of the TakeCare Badminton Open 2021 being played at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

In the women's singles, Malou Malasarte is safely into the finals after a 21-11, 21-19 victory over Angie Ito. Relegated to the loser's bracket, Ito will play Rowena Houk for a chance to challenge Malasarte for all the marbles.

In the men's doubles, Lance Gallardo and Chris Hilario will face Allan Relativo and Hapi Gabriel in the Group A finals after they

See FULL on Page 19

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Ella Serrano, left, and Lucelle Lampera have advanced to Group A finals of the women's doubles B division of the TakeCare Badminton Open 2021 last weekend at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Lady Manta Rays 2 finally win; playoffs start today

By MARK RABAGO
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Saipan Southern High School 2 finally got itself in the win column in the last day of the regular season of the NMIVA-PSS Interscholastic Girls High School Volleyball League 2021-2022 last Tuesday at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

The Lady Manta Rays 2 outlasted Mt. Carmel School 2 in three tightly-fought sets, 25-27, 25-22, 15-11. Despite the win though, the lasses of Shawn Davis still wound up last in the team standings at 1-10 and will have a David vs. Goliath matchup with undefeated Grace Christian Academy 1 in the playoffs that start today.

SSHS 2 team is made up of Mai J. S. Peters, Angelina A. Mejia, Bianca H. Zapanta, Chelsea R. Cruz, Benicia I. Sablan, Diviane N. D. Tudela,

See LADY on Page 19

MARK RABAGO

Saipan Southern High School 2, seen here in a file photo against Kagman High School, finally won its first game in the NMIVA-PSS Interscholastic Girls High School Volleyball League 2021-2022 season last Tuesday at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.